Godhead is light. Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no nescience.

BACK TO GODHEAD

The Magazine of the Hare Krishna Movement • Sep/Oct 2010 • $4.50

An Experience of MĀYĀPUR DHĀMA

ISKCON's Grand Complex In Lord Caitanya's Land

HARMFUL INCLINATIONS

WHY WE STAY IN THE MATERIAL WORLD

FINDING SHELTER IN TIMES OF SUFFERING

MOTIVATION IN KṚṢṆA CONSCIOUSNESS

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BACK to GODH

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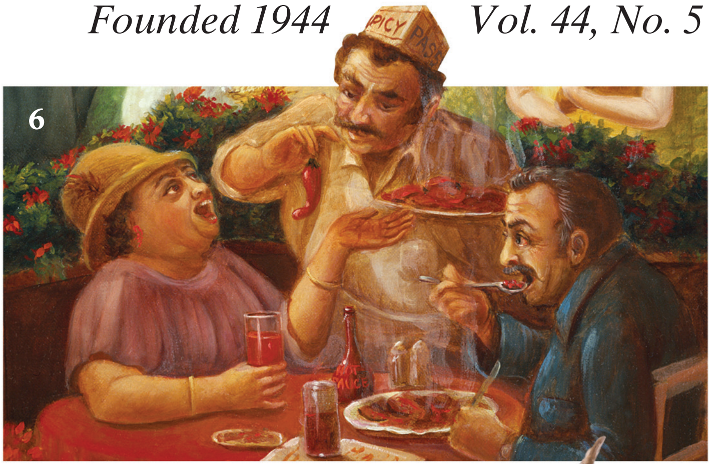
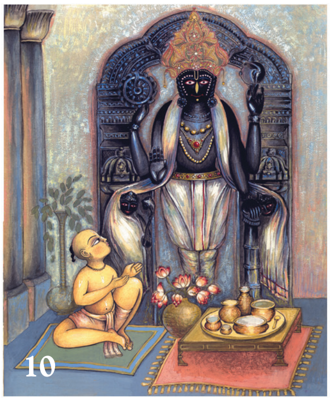
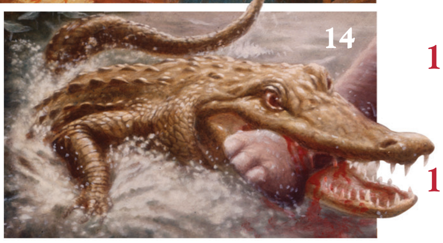
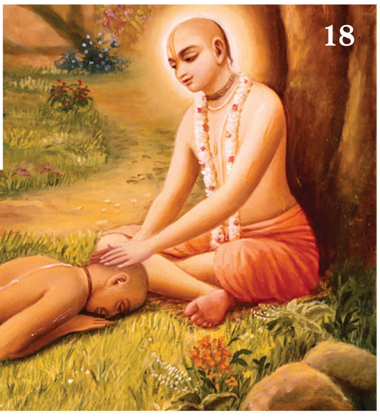
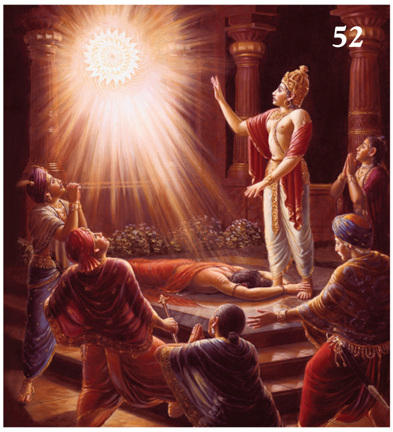










FEATURES

Founder's Lecture

6 **Harmful Inclinations**
Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that as long as we engage in sense enjoyment, we have to stay in the material world.

10 **Offerings with Love**
Kṛṣṇa accepts what His devotees offer Him, and they want to offer Him their whole lives.

14 **Finding Shelter in Times of Suffering**
The ancient story of the elephant Gajendra provides valuable guidance on how to respond to adversity.

18 **The Ecstasy of Insignificance: Happiness Through Reality**
We are truly significant when we freely acknowledge Kṛṣṇa's significance and unify our will with His.

Spiritual Places

24 **An Experience of Māyāpur Dhāma**
ISKCON's impressive complex near Caitanya Mahāprabhu's birthplace abounds with examples of devotional service.

38 **Motivation in Kṛṣṇa Consciousness**
How to stop the material energy from dampening our spiritual enthusiasm.

How I Came to Kṛṣṇa Conciousness

49 **An Intellect Discovers Its Perfection**
A young man discovers that academic achievement is not enough to fulfill his deepest longings.

52 **Praying for the Welfare of Others**
What part does prayer play in our spiritual lives?

DEPARTMENTS

Letters 4
Glossary 9

EAD

e-Krishna 23

In Your Own Words 36

Calendar 42

Book Section: Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 43
Dhruva Mahārāja's Regrets

Śrīla Prabhupāda Speaks Out 47
Why We Stay in the Material World

Hare Kṛṣṇa Mahā-Mantra 56

Centers Around the World 59

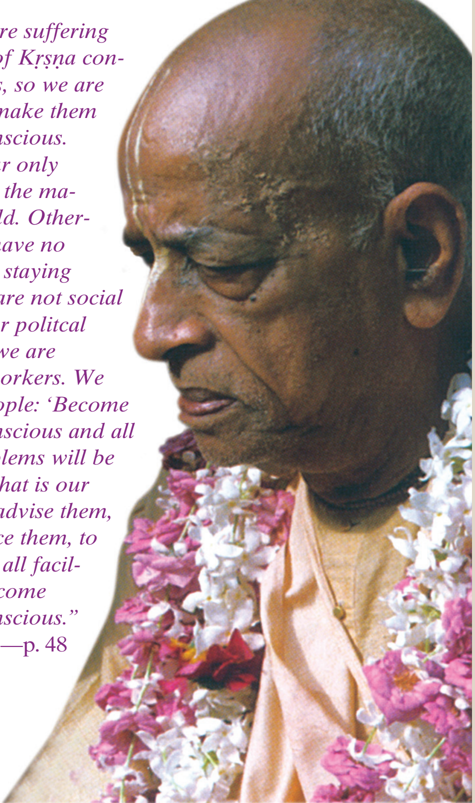
From the Editor 62
A Leap of Understanding

Krishna.com Store 63

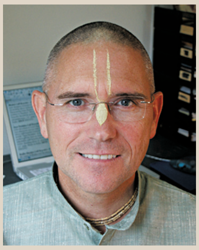
Vedic Thoughts 67

COVER A devotee bathes in the sacred Ganges in Māyāpur, the birthplace of Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Please see the article on the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement's temple and community in Māyāpur beginning on page 24. (Photo by Kaivalya Sundarī Devī Dāsī.)

"People are suffering for want of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, so we are trying to make them Kṛṣṇa conscious. That is our only interest in the material world. Otherwise, we have no interest in staying here. We are not social workers or politcal workers: we are Kṛṣṇa's workers. We advise people: 'Become Kṛṣṇa conscious and all your problems will be solved.' That is our duty—to advise them, to convince them, to give them all facilities to become Kṛṣṇa conscious."
—p. 48



WELCOME



ACCORDING TO the Vedic literature, Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Lord, lived on Earth five thousand years ago. Then, about five hundred years ago, He came again, this time disguised as His own devotee. Known as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, He appeared in Māyāpur, West Bengal, and revealed the best spiritual practice for this age: the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra. The International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness (ISKCON), or the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, comes in the line of spiritual masters linked to Caitanya Mahāprabhu and has a large temple complex in Māyāpur, just down the road from Caitanya's birthplace. In this issue we hear what it's like to visit ISKCON Māyāpur.

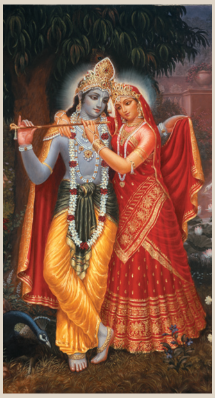
Caitanya Mahāprabhu's disciples codified His spiritual teachings and the devotional practices He recommended. Śrīla Prabhupāda incorporated those practices into the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement. In "Motivation in Kṛṣṇa Consciousness" Rashi Singh discusses some examples of those practices that help her keep up her spiritual enthusiasm.

At the core of Lord Caitanya's teachings is the idea that we should aspire only for pure devotion to God. With that principle in mind, Ūrmilā Devī Dāsī, in "Praying for the Welfare of Others," raises the question of how intercessory prayer fits with the principle of pure devotion.

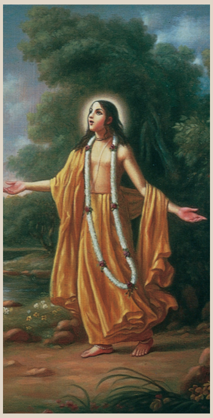
Hare Kṛṣṇa.—*Nāgarāja Dāsa, Editor*

OUR PURPOSES

- To help all people discern reality from illusion, spirit from matter, the eternal from the temporary.
- To expose the faults of materialism.
- To offer guidance in the Vedic techniques of spiritual life.
- To preserve and spread the Vedic culture.
- To celebrate the chanting of the holy names of God as taught by Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.
- To help every living being remember and serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Personality of Godhead.



Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa are together the one Supreme Absolute Truth.



Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the combined incarnation of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, inaugurated the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa five hundred years ago.

His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

BACK TO GODHEAD
The Magazine of the
Hare Krishna Movement

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Letters

Healthy Doubt

Thank you for the article on conviction [Ravīndra Svarūpa Dāsa, May/June], wherein the author raises a valid question—Is certainty possible in an age of doubt?—and concludes by proving that we are made for belief.

The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (3.26.30) points out that doubt is the distinct characteristic of intelligence:

saṁśayo ’tha viparyāso
niścayaḥ smṛtir eva ca
svāpa ity ucyate buddher
lakṣaṇaṁ vṛttitaḥ pṛthak

“Doubt, misapprehension, correct apprehension, memory, and sleep, as determined by their different functions, are said to be the distinct characteristics of intelligence.”

In the purport to this verse, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “But doubting is not very favorable when information is received from the proper source.” In this way he qualifies the verse and draws the line between doubting that is healthy and doubting that leads one to peril.

Su-gītā Vāṇī Devī Dāsī
Mayapur, India

Beneficial Movies

Regarding the article “Avatar: The Film and the Reality,” by Ūrmilā Devī Dāsī [July/August], admittedly *Avatar* deals with or is submerged in the modes of material nature. Still, I think some movies can be of spiritual benefit. Many movies today deal somewhat with God-related topics, such as honesty, forgiveness, etc. Some directly deal with God as the ultimate authority, such as the movie *Joan of Arc.*

On one walk through the park, Prabhupāda was saying how enjoyable it was. He said that others work hard to construct a nice park and we come there and enjoy it. He compared it to the example of a snake and a mouse. A mouse digs a hole, but the snake comes, eats the mouse, and lives in the hole, thus taking advantage of the mouse’s work. Some movies cost $200 million to make. Could the same principle apply?

Cakrī Dāsa
St. Louis, Missouri

Ūrmilā Devī Dāsī replies: I mention in my article that most movies are not suitable for spiritual practitioners. Certainly there are some movies, books, and so forth, that are of help to those who wish to attain full spiritual perfection. For example, when we teach children, we include books and movies about history, geography, and science. Some adults may also find some nonfiction books or movies useful in their particular service to the Lord.

In our tradition, there is also a place for fiction as a vehicle for teaching truth. For example, in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* there are several fictional stories, the longest being the story of Purañjana. Similarly, there are some fictional books and movies that teach truth. Unfortunately, these are the notable exception, and the vast majority of modern media, of any kind, serves to encourage and nourish illusion.

Seeing Kṛṣṇa

How can I see Lord Kṛṣṇa?

Preeti
Via the Internet

Our reply: The scriptures say that the price to see Kṛṣṇa is simply our intense desire to see Him. We have to be eager to advance to a high level of purity, which can be achieved only by the grace of the spiritual master. If we serve the spiritual master, then we become a candidate for seeing Kṛṣṇa.

Spiritual life is not cheap. We have to practice sincerely, with great determination. Therefore in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement we have a regulated life of chanting and hearing about Kṛṣṇa, refraining from forbidden activities, and serving Kṛṣṇa and guru. These things will purify us, and then Kṛṣṇa will be pleased to have us back in His association. It is said that we shouldn't try to see God but should act in such a way that He will want to see us. *Bhakti* is what attracts Him, so keep steadily engaged in His service and glorify Him always.

Humanitarian Services

It's true that social service is temporary, but some social service is essential for devotional service. Why are there some ISKCON schools and Bhaktivedanta Hospital to serve the affected? What are other humanitarian services run by ISKCON?

Upkar
Via the Internet

Our reply: Humanitarian work is only helpful in the bigger picture of life if the ultimate goal is to bring people closer to Kṛṣṇa. Bhaktivedanta Hospital helps people materially, but also spiritually. The form of Śrīla Prabhupāda sits in the front hall, and doctors not only provide medical treatment, but they also offer *prasādam.* Spiritual guidance is also offered in the hospital. It is a combination of spiritual and material welfare.

ISKCON schools are meant to offer both spiritual and material education so that students are trained to function well in both material and spiritual environments.

ISKCON has programs for the free distribution of food, but the food is *prasādam,* so this "humanitarian" service provides both spiritual and material assistance. Devotees also assist other devotees with material aspects of their lives, as well as offering spiritual support and guidance. Both types of aid to devotees are considered devotional service.

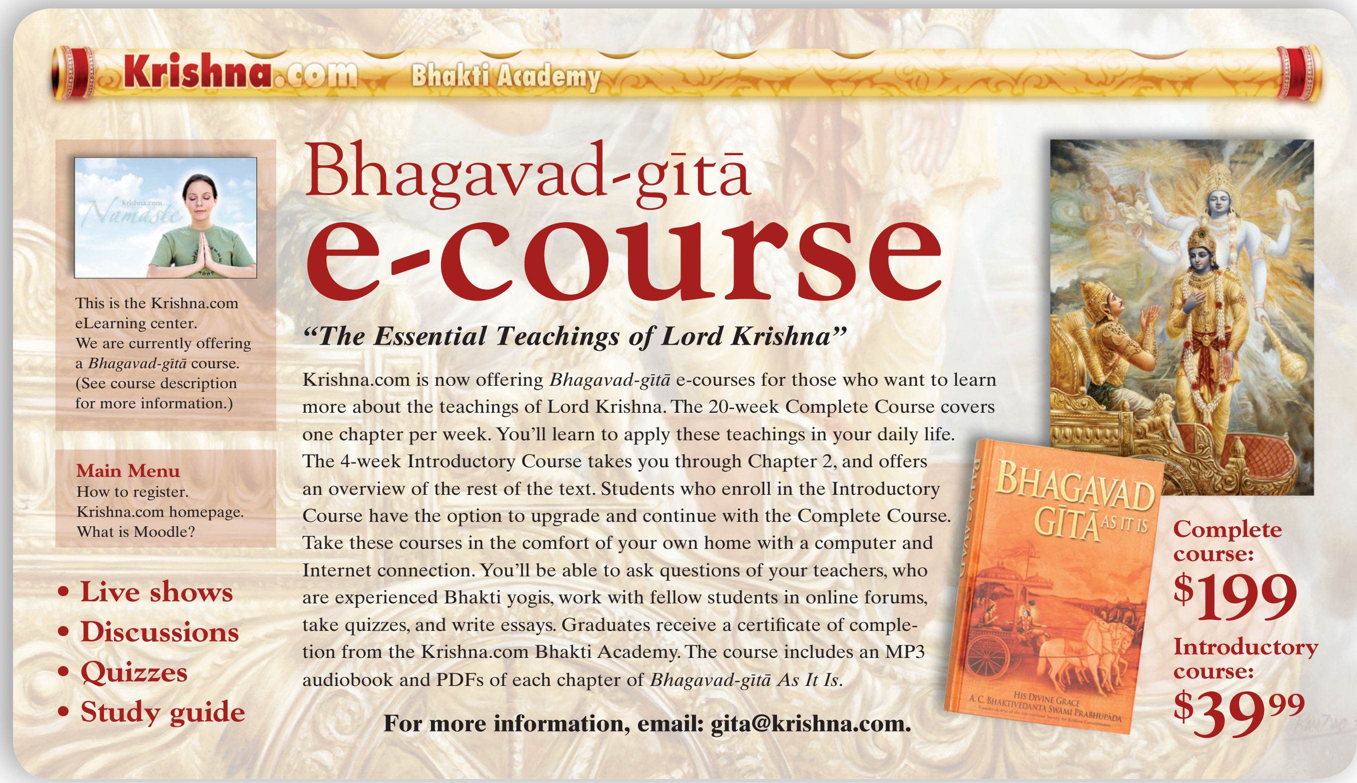
Bad Situations

Although we are doing *bhakti* with full devotion, if at any time in life a bad situation occurs, then what to do? And what may be the reason behind it?

Nidhi Gaur
Via the Internet

(*please turn to page 58*)

CORRECTIONS: The cover painting for the July/August issue was by Rañcora Dāsa, and the painting on page 12 was by Jhānavā Devī Dāsī.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FOUNDER'S LECTURE

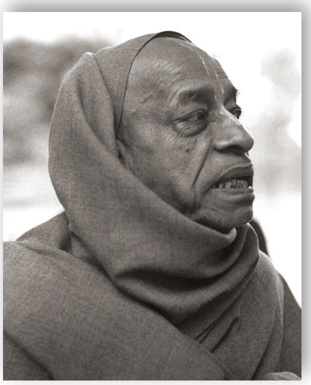
Honolulu, Hawaii—May 6, 1976

HARMFUL INCLINATIONS

Our proclivity to enjoy here under the influence of the material nature keeps us bound to material existence.

by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

Founder-*Ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness



pravṛtti-lakṣaṇaś caiva
traiguṇya-viṣayo mune
yo 'sāv alīna-prakṛter
guṇa-sargaḥ punaḥ punaḥ

"O great sage Śukadeva Gosvāmī, unless the living entity is freed from the infection of the material modes of nature, he receives different types of bodies in which to enjoy or suffer, and according to the body, he is understood to have various inclinations. By following these inclinations he traverses the path called *pravṛtti-mārga,* by which one may be elevated to the heavenly planets, as you have already described [in the Third Canto].

—*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 6.1.2

PARĪKṢIT MAHĀRĀJA is trying to understand *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti.* Anyone in the material world, beginning from Lord Brahmā down to the small ant, has come here on account of *pravṛtti,* which means, especially, the inclination to enjoy sex. As long as we engage in sense enjoyment in different varieties, we have to remain within the material world.

Kṛṣṇa is so kind. We wanted to enjoy the material world; therefore He has given us full opportunity: "Yes, enjoy."

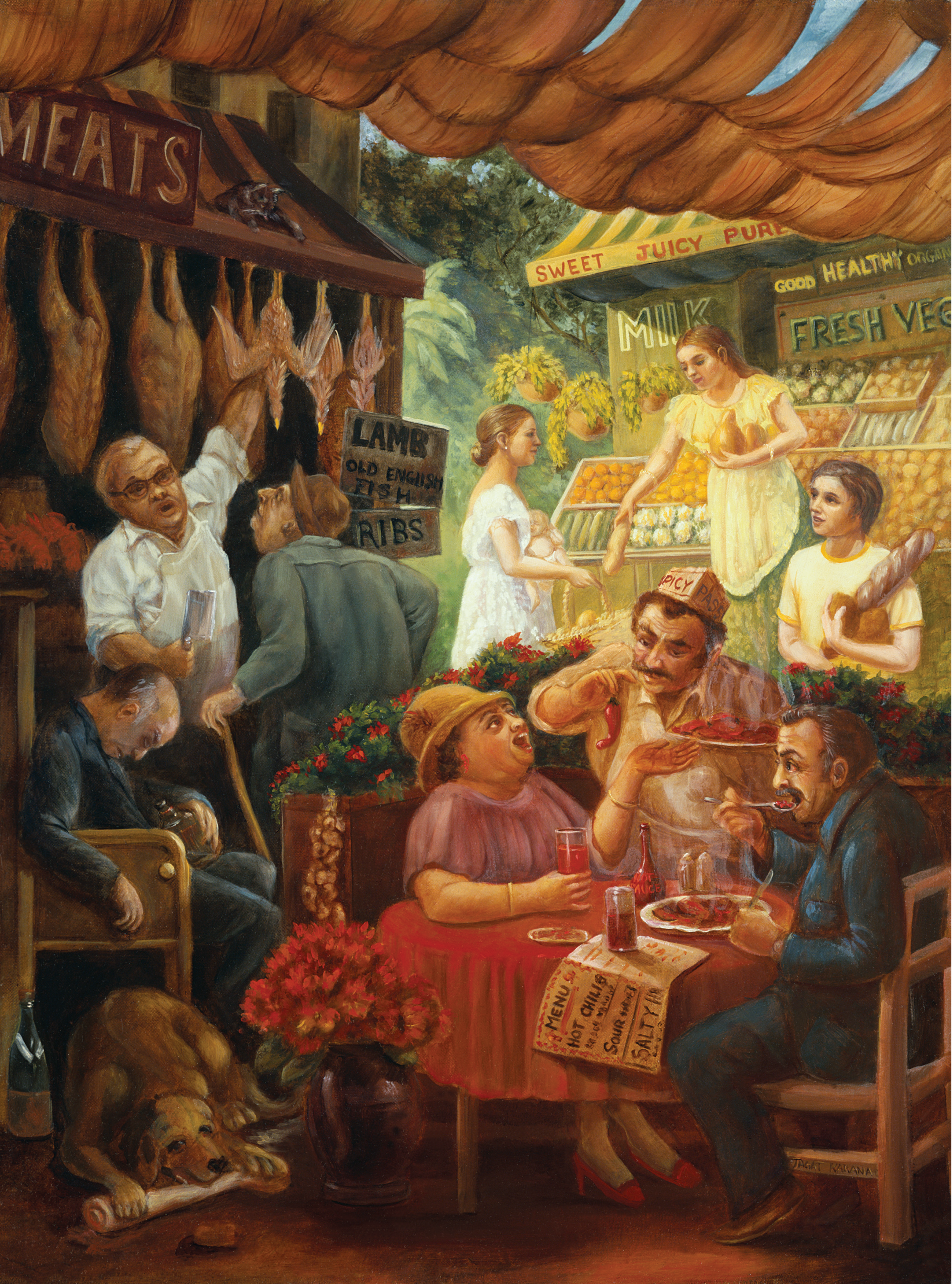
But Kṛṣṇa does not want us to enjoy the material world. Sometimes foolish people say, "Kṛṣṇa has given us this facility for sense enjoyment. Why shall we not take it?" Sometimes the so-called *ṛṣis* and yogis also say, "Yes, we have senses, and they are meant for enjoyment. Why should it be stopped?" But if you want the real life of eternal enjoyment, then you have to stop sensual enjoyment. If you don't stop, then you remain here. You have to be born according to your desire, either as Brahmā or an ant, a cat, a dog, a demigod. And according to your capacity, Kṛṣṇa will provide for you. If you want sense enjoyment from Kṛṣṇa, He will give you all facilities. But Kṛṣṇa does not want to do this. His opinion is "You will never be happy in this process of *pravṛtti-mārga.*"

When we turn away from Kṛṣṇa, we are caught by *māyā,* the condition in which we enjoy material sense gratification. There are two things: light and darkness. If you remain in light there is no darkness, and if you prefer to remain in darkness there is no light. *Māyā* is darkness, and Kṛṣṇa is light. That is the motto of *Back to Godhead:* "Godhead is light. Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no nescience." That is our position.

There are different *pravṛttis,* or inclinations. One animal wants to eat something, and another animal wants to eat something else. The hog is satisfied with stool, and an enlightened human being is satisfied with nice *halava.* Each inclination comes according to the modes of nature. The food of a

Right: We mistakenly think that trying to please the senses will bring us happiness.

Painting by Jagat-kāraṇa Devī Dāsī


MEATS
SWEET JUICY PURE
GOOD HEALTHY ORGAN
MILK
FRESH VEG
LAMB
OLD ENGLISH FISH
RIBS
SPICY PASTA
HOT SAUCE
MENU
HOT CHILIS
SOUR
SALTY
JAGAT KARANA

person in the mode of goodness is different from that of a person in the mode of ignorance. Therefore we find so many varieties of food, because of the varieties of taste.

Vegetarianism Is Not Enough

This morning we were talking about vegetarian and nonvegetarian. Our mission is not to make a nonvegetarian a vegetarian. No. Our mission is "Whether you are vegetarian or nonvegetarian, it doesn't matter. Become Kṛṣṇa conscious." That is our mission. To become vegetarian is not a very good qualification. It is better than being nonvegetarian, but that is not the ultimate solution. The ultimate solution is to become a lover of God. We are not preaching vegetarianism. Jainism, Buddhism, and other religious systems are trying to make people vegetarian.

The law of nature is that one living entity is food for another. The animals are eating each other. Living entities with hands eat those without hands. Living entities with legs eat those without legs, such as trees.

Trees have "legs," but they cannot move with those legs. Their legs are used for drinking water. That is God's creation. You cannot think how it is possible to drink water with the leg, but it is God's creation. You see? You pour water on the leg of the tree, and it becomes very luxuriant, healthy.

As for God, He can eat with His legs; He can see with His hands; He can eat with His eyes. His senses are transcendental. He is not under any restrictions. If you offer some food to Kṛṣṇa, simply by seeing it He is eating it. That is Kṛṣṇa. "If He is eating, why is the plate still full?" Kṛṣṇa is not a hungry man like me. If you give me food, I will eat everything, and it will be finished. But Kṛṣṇa can eat the whole plate, and it will all remain for being distributed as *prasādam.*

Try to understand Kṛṣṇa in this way. If you actually understand Kṛṣṇa, you are liberated immediately. How Kṛṣṇa eats, how Kṛṣṇa thinks, how Kṛṣṇa works—if you understand all these things, then immediately you become liberated.

janma karma ca me divyam
evaṁ yo vetti tattvataḥ
tyaktvā dehaṁ punar janma
naiti mām eti so 'rjuna

"One who knows the transcendental nature of My appearance and activities does not, upon leaving the body, take his birth again in this material world, but attains My eternal abode O Arjuna." (*Bhagavad-gītā* 4.9) We are rotting in this material world because we do not know Kṛṣṇa. You'll not be admitted into the spiritual kingdom unless you know Kṛṣṇa. As soon as you understand Kṛṣṇa, you are fit to go to Him and never return to the material world.

Therefore Kṛṣṇa comes here. We have the inclination to enjoy the material world, so Kṛṣṇa comes personally and says, "This will not help you. Give up this habit and simply surrender to Me. I will take you back home, back to Godhead." We are inclined to enjoy the material world, but if we stop material enjoyment we are fit for spiritual life. That is the philosophy.

Therefore Kṛṣṇa says in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.3),

aśraddadhānāḥ puruṣā
dharmasyāsya parantapa
aprāpya māṁ nivartante
mṛtyu-saṁsāra-vartmani

"Those who are not faithful in this devotional service cannot attain Me, O conqueror of enemies. Therefore they return to the path of birth and death in this material world." In the *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa is saying, "Surrender unto Me." But if one has no faith in Kṛṣṇa's words and rejects His proposal, what is the result? *Aprāpya mām:* "He'll never get Me." He will have to continue the process of being born and dying, being born and dying. That will continue.

So you have to give up the mentality that "I am the master. I can enjoy. I am independent." You have to give up that idea. Then you will be eligible to go back home, back to Godhead.

Thank you very much.

What Is the Hare Kṛṣṇa Movement?

Founded in 1966 by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) carries on a great ancient tradition rooted in the *Bhagavad-gītā,* the teachings Lord Kṛṣṇa spoke five millennia ago. The *Gītā* and the other Vedic scriptures declare Kṛṣṇa to be the original person, God Himself, who appears periodically in this world to liberate all living beings.

Only five hundred years ago, Kṛṣṇa descended as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu to teach the most sublime and effective means of meditation for the present day: the chanting of the names of God, especially as found in the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra.

Today members of ISKCON continue Lord Caitanya's movement by distributing the teachings of Lord Kṛṣṇa and the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra all over the world.

Pronunciation

We spell Sanskrit words and names by a phonetic system that lets you know how to say each word. Pronounce short **a** like the **u** in b**u**t, long **ā** like the **a** in f**a**r (and held twice as long as the short **a**). Pronounce **e** like the **a** in ev**a**de, long **ī** like the **i** in p**i**que. Pronounce the vowel **ṛ** like the **ri** in **ri**m, and **c** like the **ch** in **ch**air. Pronounce consonants like **ch, jh,** and **dh** as in staun**ch-h**eart, hed**ge-h**og, and re**d-h**ot. Pronounce **ś** and **ṣ** like **sh.** So for *Kṛṣṇa* say KRISHNA, for *Caitanya* say CHAITANYA.

Spiritual Names

ISKCON members receive names of Lord Kṛṣṇa or his great devotees, combined with Dāsa, for men, or Dāsī, for women, both of which mean "servant." For instance, the name Kṛṣṇa Dāsa means "servant of Kṛṣṇa."

Glossary

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Ācārya—a spiritual master who teaches by example.

Balarāma—Lord Kṛṣṇa's first expansion, who acts in the role of Lord Kṛṣṇa's elder brother.

Battle of Kurukshetra—an epic battle for rule of the world, fought five thousand years ago.

Bhagavad-gītā—the sacred book in which Lord Kṛṣṇa gives the essence of knowledge to His friend and disciple Arjuna. (Cited as Bg.)

Bhakti—devotional service to the Supreme Lord.

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura—the spiritual master of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.

Bhakti-yoga—linking with the Supreme Lord through devotional service.

Caitanya Mahāprabhu—the incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa who appeared five hundred years ago to teach the chanting of the names of God as the religion for the present age.

Darśana—"viewing," audience with a deity or saintly person.

Dharma—(1) ordained duties or religious principles; (2) one's eternal, natural occupation (i.e., devotional service to the Lord).

Godhead—the Absolute Truth, the Supreme Reality, progressively realized first as the impersonal all-pervasive oneness, more fully as the Supersoul within the heart of every living being, and ultimately as the all-opulent Supreme Person.

Gurukula—a school where children learn the philosophy and practices of Kṛṣṇa consciousness along with regular academic subjects (literally "the place of the guru").

Hare Kṛṣṇa—the great mantra Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

ISKCON—the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

Japa—individual chanting of names of God, usually while counting on beads.

Kali-yuga—in the endlessly repeated cycle of four cosmic ages, the present and worst age, the Age of Quarrel, of which 5,000 of 432,000 years have passed.

Karma—material action; its inevitable reaction; or the law by which such action and reaction are governed.

Kīrtana—congregational singing of names of God, usually accompanied by cymbals (*karatālas*) and drums (*mṛdaṅgas*).

Kṛṣṇa—the Supreme Personality of Godhead in His original transcendental form (see "Godhead").

Mahābhārata—the epic history of ancient India, a history in which the *Bhagavad-gītā* appears as the most important and well-known text.

Māyā—illusion; the energy of the Supreme Lord that deludes living entities into forgetting their spiritual nature and forgetting God.

Māyāvādī—one who regards the Absolute Truth as ultimately impersonal.

Modes of nature—the three qualities (goodness, passion, and ignorance) that hold sway over all action in the material world.

Nityānanda—the incarnation of Lord Balarāma who appeared with Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

Prasādam—vegetarian food that has been prepared for the Lord and offered to Him with devotion.

Purāṇas—Vedic histories.

Rādhārāṇī—Lord Kṛṣṇa's consort and pleasure potency.

Rathayātrā—"chariot festival": a festival in which the form of Kṛṣṇa is borne in procession on a large canopy-topped chariot or float, especially the festival originating in Puri, India, for Jagannātha (Lord Kṛṣṇa, "the Lord of the universe").

Sannyāsa—the renounced life of a man who relinquishes home to dedicate himself fully to the Supreme.

Śrī—an honorific meaning "opulent" (similarly: Śrīla, Śrīmad, Śrīmān, Śrīmatī).

Śrīla Prabhupāda—His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the founder-*ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam—the most important of the eighteen *Purāṇas,* which tells of the nature and pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa and His devotees.

Supersoul—the form of the Lord who resides in every heart along with the individual soul.

Upaniṣads—the 108 essential philosophical treatises that appear within the *Vedas.*

Vaiṣṇava—a devotee of the Supreme Lord (from the word *Viṣṇu*).

Varṇāśrama—the Vedic social system. It organizes society into four occupational and four spiritual divisions (*varṇas* and *āśramas*). The members of the four *varṇas* are the *brāhmaṇas* (intellectuals and priests), the *kṣatriyas* (administrators and soldiers), the *vaiśyas* (farmers and businessmen), and the *śūdras* (laborers and artisans). The members of the four *āśramas* are the *brahmacārīs* (celibate students), *gṛhasthas* (married people), *vānaprasthas* (retired people), and *sannyāsīs* (renunciants).

Vedas—the hymns of knowledge revealed by the Lord Himself at the beginning of creation.

Vedic—pertaining to the culture in which the *Vedas* and related scriptures guide all aspects of human life.

Viṣṇu—any form of the Personality of Godhead (see "Godhead"); the forms the Lord manifests to create and sustain the material world.

Vṛndāvana—the transcendental abode of Lord Kṛṣṇa, mirrored on earth as the town in India where Kṛṣṇa appeared five thousand years ago.

Offerings With Love

Kṛṣṇa is self-satisfied and does not need anything, but out of His mercy He will accept our offerings of love and devotion.

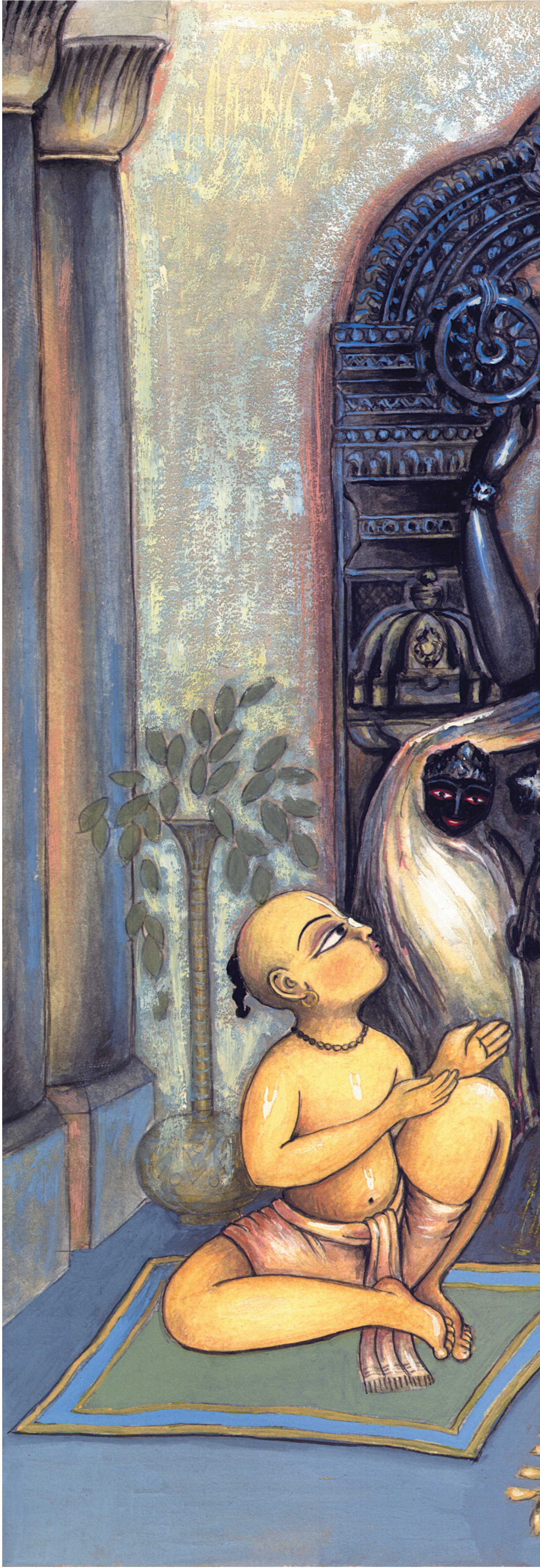
By Mohinī Rādhā Devī Dāsī

KṚṢṆA'S SUPREME opulence surpasses all description and comparison. Millions of goddesses of fortune serve Him in the spiritual realm. He is the supreme controller, the ultimate refuge, and the proprietor of everything. Yet, because of His love for His devotees, the all-powerful Lord accepts their loving offerings.

Kṛṣṇa consciousness helps us recognize and reestablish our original position as eternal servants of Kṛṣṇa. As minute parts of Kṛṣṇa, we should direct all of our activities toward His service with an attitude of love (see *Bhagavad-gītā* 9.27). In this way, as an offering to Him, our entire life becomes shaped on the principle of *bhakti*, devotional service.

We can offer all aspects of our life to Kṛṣṇa, but one of the most important and practical offerings is food. Kṛṣṇa declares that devotees who eat food offered in sacrifice to Him make spiritual advancement but those who prepare food for personal sense enjoyment "verily eat only sin" (*Bhagavad-gītā* 3.13). Eating food without first offering it to the Lord increases our material entanglement and our false identity as the enjoyers of our senses. Our senses are meant to serve Kṛṣṇa, who is known as Hṛṣīkeśa, "the master of the senses," the ultimate enjoyer. By offering tasty vegetarian dishes for Kṛṣṇa's pleasure, we not only avoid sinful reactions, but also make spiritual progress toward pure devotion.

Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna, "If one offers Me with love and devotion a leaf, a flower, fruit, or water, I will accept it." (*Bhagavad-gītā* 9.26) Out of His causeless mercy, Kṛṣṇa will accept even the smallest token of our faith—even



Right: Madhu asks the Lord, "Please eat this; otherwise my father will be angry with me."

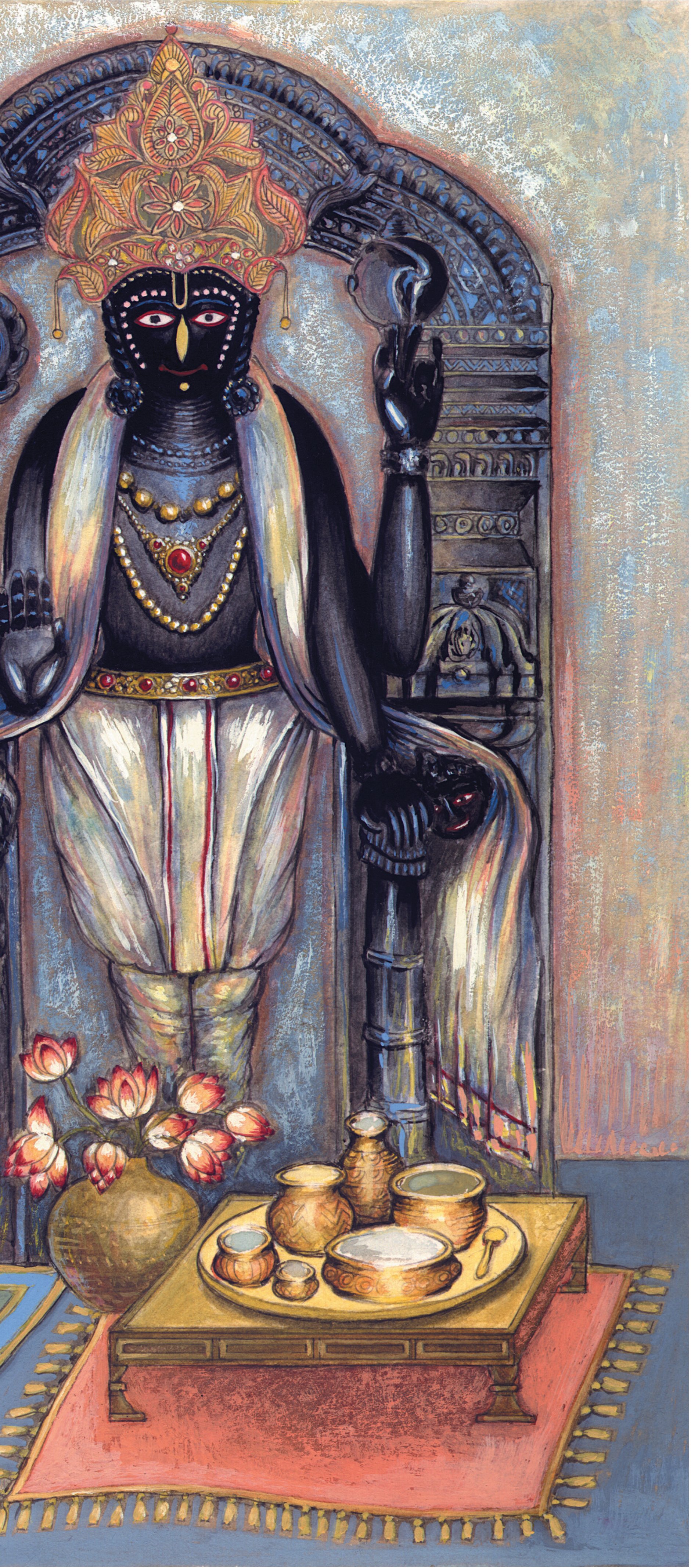


Illustration by Anurādhā Devī Dāsī

a little water or a *tulasī* leaf—if it is offered with love and devotion. When Kṛṣṇa asks us to make such an offering, He is really inviting us to reawaken our eternal, blissful relationship with Him. The key ingredient in the offering process is devotion.

As the Supreme Lord, the cause of all causes, the proprietor of everything, Kṛṣṇa is *ātmārāma*, self-satisfied. Yet He is so kind to the living entities that to aid their spiritual progress He accepts their offerings. As Śrīla Prabhupāda explains, Kṛṣṇa does not need food, yet He will accept the offering of His devotee who wants to please Him (*Bhagavad-gītā* 9.26, Purport). The key element in the preparation and offering is an attitude of love for Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is not hungry, but He hungers for our devotion.

Duryodhana's Offering Rejected

Kṛṣṇa does not always accept what is offered to Him. The *Mahābhārata* describes Kṛṣṇa's trip to Hastinapura as a peace messenger on behalf of the Pāṇḍavas before the Battle of Kurukshetra. When Kṛṣṇa arrived, Duryodhana invited Him to an opulent feast in a political effort to bribe Him. Duryodhana's grandiose feast featured many delicious dishes, but Kṛṣṇa refused to accept an offering motivated by self-interest rather than love. He stated two reasons to accept something: if one is in need, or if it is offered with love.

Kṛṣṇa is self-satisfied, so He can never be in need. Because Duryodhana's invitation was not offered with love, Kṛṣṇa declined it and instead went to Vidura's house, where He enjoyed a simple meal offered by His dear devotees. Vidura's wife, Vidurāṇī, felt such great ecstasy at the opportunity to serve Kṛṣṇa personally that she offered Him a banana peel instead of the fruit, and Kṛṣṇa ate it with great relish. He could not reject this offering of pure love.

On another occasion, Kṛṣṇa traveled to Mithila to visit Bahulāśva and Śrutadeva, two devotees who had pleased Him by their devotion. Bahulāśva was the king of Videha, but led a simple and Kṛṣṇa conscious life. Once, at Dwarka, Bahulāśva decided to prostrate himself before Kṛṣṇa one hundred times, but he became so overwhelmed by feelings of spontaneous love that after only one prostration, he could not rise. Śrutadeva was a poor *brāhmaṇa,* but was satisfied with whatever he had and always thought about Kṛṣṇa. When the Lord arrived in Mithila, Śrutadeva danced in ecstasy.

Both Śrutadeva and Bahulāśva humbly requested the Lord to visit their homes. To satisfy and please these great souls, the Lord duplicated Himself and visited both homes simultaneously. This is another example of Kṛṣṇa's reciprocation with His devotees for their transcendental satisfaction.

The offerings of Vidura, Bahulāśva, and Śrutadeva were spontaneous and pure, and we can make spiritual progress just by hearing about them.

Devotees such as Vidura, Bahulāśva, and Śrutadeva were fortunate to serve Kṛṣṇa personally when He appeared on this planet. Their offerings were spontaneous and pure, and we can make spiritual progress just by hearing about them.

A Special Devotee in Puri

Kṛṣṇa also accepts offerings in His deity form. The deity is not simply a representation of Kṛṣṇa but is Kṛṣṇa Himself. Kṛṣṇa's form as Jagannātha, "Lord of the Universe," shows special mercy toward surrendered souls, and countless devotees throughout history have appealed to Him to accept their offerings. In Jagannātha's temple in Puri, Orissa, a special class of priests follows strict regulative worship of the Lord, who appears with His elder brother, Balarāma, and sister, Subhadrā. Only certain *brāhmaṇas* are allowed to cook and offer the prescribed fifty-six daily preparations, a fact that makes the pastimes of Dasia Bauri, preserved in the local oral history of Puri, especially sweet.

Dasia Bauri came from a low-caste family and lived near Puri, in a village called Baligram. Dasia was poor and uneducated. Forbidden entrance to the temple because of his caste, he showed unflinching faith in the Lord. Once, Dasia gave a coconut to a *brāhmaṇa* who was on his way to the temple. He requested the *brāhmaṇa* to offer the coconut to Lord Jagannatha on his behalf, but to bring it back if the Lord rejected it.

The *brāhmaṇa* proudly laughed at Dasia's childish foolishness, but said he would offer the coconut. Once he was inside the temple, the *brāhmaṇa* held the coconut before Jagannātha and repeated Dasia's message.

"Dasia Bauri has sent this coconut for You. Please accept it; otherwise I will take it back."

Suddenly, Jagannātha extended His arm from the altar and took the coconut directly out of the *brāhmaṇa's* hand, to the *brāhmaṇa's* great surprise. Dasia Bauri's sincere devotion was so great that the Lord personally accepted his indirect offering. Since the Lord is situated in the heart of every living entity in His Paramātmā feature, He could see Dasia's strong desire to please Him, and so He accepted the simple offering.

On another occasion, Dasia Bauri went to Puri carrying a large basket of mangoes for the Lord. When he reached the Lion's Gate entrance to the temple, a group of *brāhmaṇas* started fighting over who would take the mangoes inside the temple to offer to the Lord. Dasia Bauri told them that he did not need them to offer the mangoes for him.

The *brāhmaṇas* were bewildered, as they were proud of their position, and did not think the low-caste devotee eligible to offer anything to the Lord. Dasia's faith was unshaken, however, and he simply stood back a short distance and focused his gaze on the Nilachakra, the large wheel on top of the temple. In that way he saw the form of the Lord, because the name, form, and paraphernalia of the Lord are nondifferent from Him. Nilachakra is nondifferent from Jagannātha.

When Dasia held up two mangoes and showed them to the Nilachakra, they disappeared. Dasia repeatedly offered mangoes in this way until his basket was empty. A crowd gathered around Dasia and watched the mangoes disappear, as if by magic.

When Dasia told the *brāhmaṇas* that Jagannātha had eaten the mangoes, they rushed into the temple and found mango skins and seeds lying all around the altar. Mango juice was dripping down Jagannātha's smiling face. The *brāhmaṇas* then understood that Dasia Bauri was a great devotee of the Lord, and their pride vanished. Dasia Bauri's offerings showed the world that the Lord looks only for faith and love, not high birth, education, or the opulence of the offering.

The Lord Eats A Boy's Offerings

Even a child can manifest symptoms of sincere devotion. About fourteen miles from Jagannātha's temple stands the temple of a deity named Ālarnātha. Lord Brahmā installed this four-armed deity in Satya-yuga, millions of years ago, and since then the worship has been the responsibility of certain *brāhmaṇa* families. Once, it was the responsibility of Sri Ketana, who had a son named Madhu. When Sri Ketana had to go out for several days to beg alms for the temple, he gave his son the service of offering meals to Ālarnātha.

After the boy's mother finished cooking, she gave the plate to Madhu and told him to offer it to Lord Ālarnātha. He did not know the proper offering procedure, but his father had instructed him to simply ask the Lord to take what was placed before Him. Madhu sat in front of the Lord, told Him that he didn't know how to offer anything properly, and requested that He take the offering. Then Madhu went outside to play, so that the Lord could eat.

Kṛṣṇa is transcendental, and each of His senses can do the work of the others. He can eat with His eyes and leave His remnants behind as *prasādam,* His mercy for the devotees. Madhu did not realize this, and thought that the Lord was supposed to eat everything on the plate. When he returned to the temple, he was surprised that the Lord's meal seemed untouched. Afraid that his mother would be angry that the Lord did not accept the offering, Madhu offered the meal again.

"My dear Lord, You have not eaten the food I left for You. My father has instructed me to make this offering for You while he is away. I am a little boy and do not know how to offer anything to You in a proper way. Please eat this; otherwise my father will be angry with me."

He again went outside to play, but when he came back, the meal was still untouched. Crying, he pleaded with the Lord to accept the offering. When he returned, he saw that the Lord's plate was empty, and he brought it to his mother.

"Where is the *prasādam*?" she asked.

Madhu told her that Ālarnātha had eaten everything, and so they were forced to fast. Devotees do not eat anything except Kṛṣṇa's *prasādam*.

This happened for three days. When the boy's father returned, he asked for some *prasādam*, but his wife told him that Ālarnātha had eaten the offerings for the past three days. Sri Ketana thought that his son had hidden the *prasādam*, fed it to dogs, or eaten everything himself. He told Madhu to offer the meal again. He would hide behind a curtain to watch.

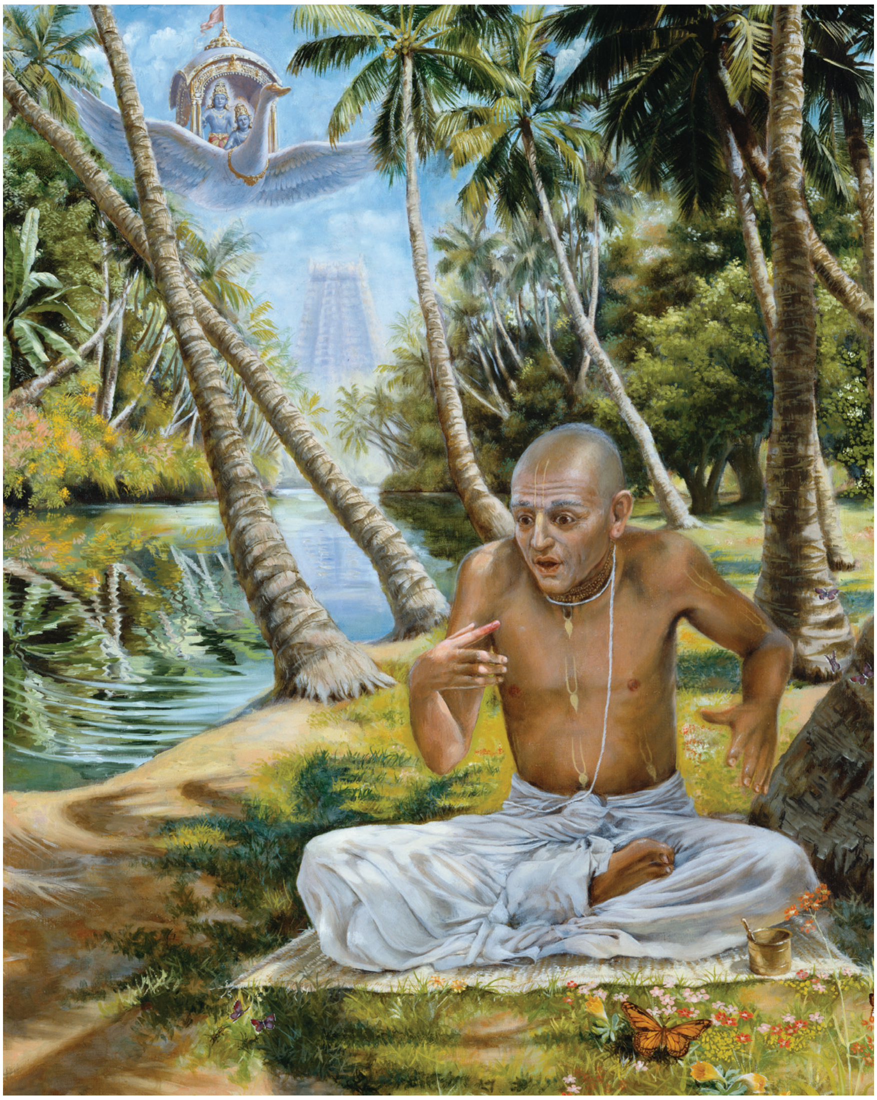
Madhu offered the plate of food to Ālarnātha the same way he had before and then went outside. From his hiding place, Sri Ketana saw the Lord stretch out His arm and take a cup of sweet rice. Sri Ketana jumped out from behind the curtain and grabbed the Lord's hand. Hot sweet rice flew out of the cup onto the Lord's body. Sri Ketana told the Lord to stop taking everything, because his family would not have anything to eat. He had never heard of a deity eating, and although he was technically a *brāhmaṇa,* he did not have faith in the process of devotional service.

The Lord then declared that He was pleased by Madhu's simple devotion but is never pleased with any offering, no matter how opulent, if it lacks devotion or is made by a materialistic, faithless person.

A Devotee's Burnt Finger

Real service to Kṛṣṇa is selfless, uninterrupted, and unconditional. Even apparent obstacles do not hinder the expression of pure devotion, which surpasses everything. Loving exchanges between the Lord and His devotee are inconceivable; they should not be held to material standards. Thus, the deepest significance

(*please turn to page 57*)



Painting by Jñānāñjana Dāsa

A brāhmaṇa *discovers that he burnt his finger while meditating that he touched hot sweet rice*

FINDING SHELTER IN TIMES OF SUFFERING

Even in the most hopeless situations there is hope—when we turn to Lord Kṛṣṇa.

By Murāri Gupta Dāsa

CAN YOU PLEASE speak to my relatives?" a doctor friend requested me after a Sunday program in our temple. "Their youngest son died in an accident recently, and they are much traumatized."

I agreed and went to meet the family in a corridor outside the temple hall. The father told me how the son had gone to a picnic with his friends and had drowned in a river. He was just eighteen. I listened sympathetically, and when they asked questions I offered answers I thought would give them hope in their painful situation. After half an hour, some of the family members seemed consoled, though the mother had been silently shedding incessant tears.

As we parted, my thoughts veered to another story I had heard. It, too, took place near a lake and was a sudden catastrophe that struck a family, but the attitude of the victim turned a life-threatening crisis upside-down.

Nightmare on an Excursion

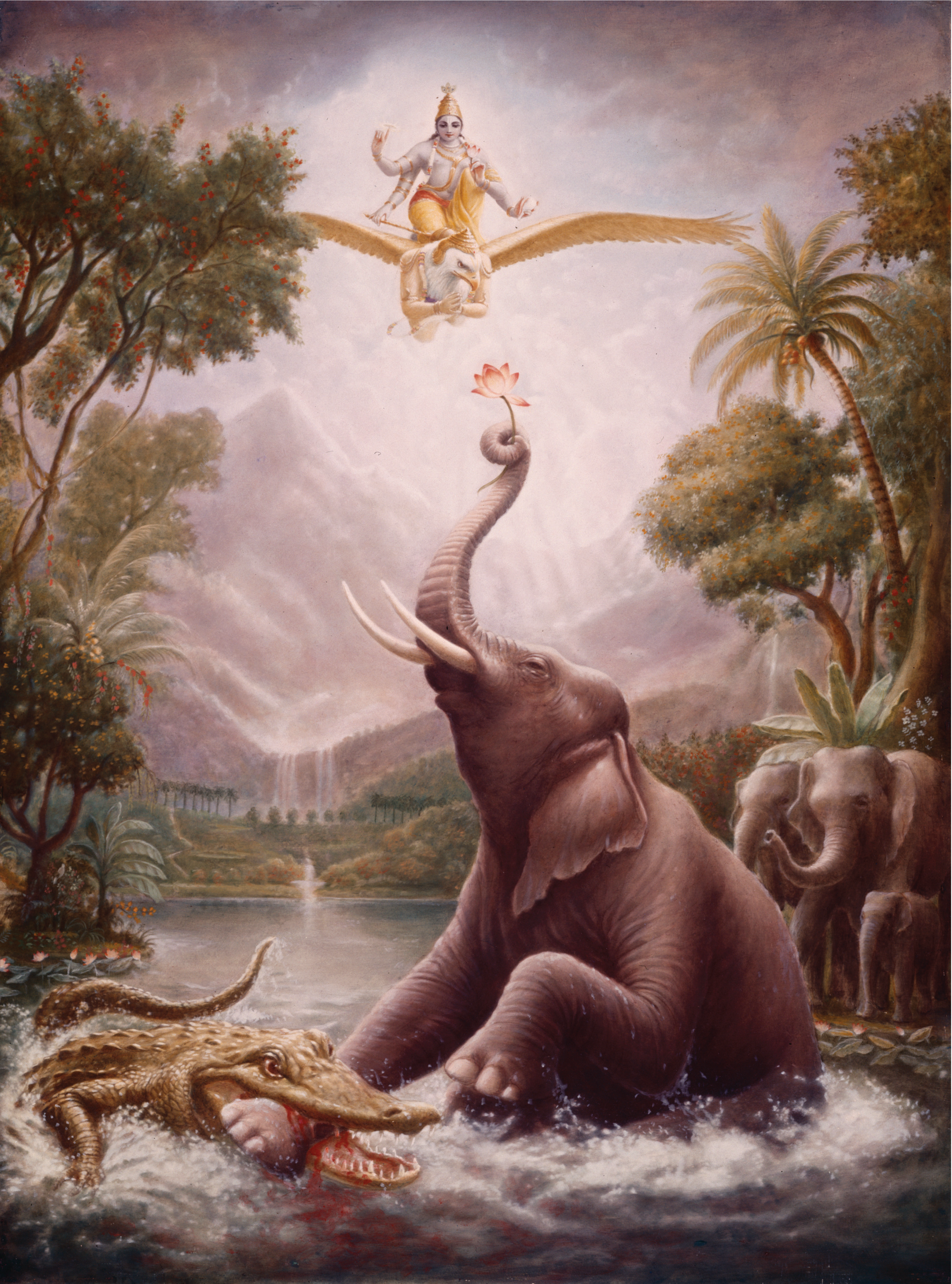
Once a mighty elephant named Gajendra, the head of his herd, went to a lake to bathe with his many wives, children, and other members of the herd. Thoroughly refreshed by the cool, clear water, they sported by spraying water over each other with their trunks. When everyone was laughing and enjoying water sports in the crystal-clear lotus-filled lake, a crocodile suddenly attacked Gajendra and would not let go. The elephant, sure of his mighty strength, fought valiantly but could not free himself. Seeing him in that grave condition, his wives cried. The other elephants tried to rescue him by grasping him from behind, but because of the crocodile's great strength, they could not succeed. The fight continued for a long time, slowly draining away the elephant's strength.

The Inevitibility of Disaster

This story, which is not over yet, is narrated in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgvatam,* which through many such narrations offers us valuable life lessons. Gajendra can represent anyone afflicted by misery. He was living what anyone would consider an ideal life—terrific power, prestige, and control, loving family and friends, and all the luxuries he could want. But now he found himself trapped in the jaws of a crocodile. Similarly, our world is full of agents of misery. They may not look as menacing as a crododile, but

Right: Responding to Gajendra's prayers, Lord Viṣṇu arrives to deliver him from the crocodile's jaws.

Painting by Muralidhara Dāsa



can cause just as much pain. They come in different forms, such as natural disasters, terrorist attacks, corruption, disease, and exploitation. These crocodiles are built into the world. We may feel safe now, but they are there, just a step away, waiting to clench their mighty jaws upon us. That is the world we live in.

We may feel that problems are indeed part of life and that we should fight them with courage and determination. But what is our usual strategy for crisis management? We pitch our personal strength, intelligence, and money, or garner support from friends, relatives, and political leaders. But sometimes all our support systems fail. Diseases, accidents, and terrorists don't avoid the rich, the famous, or the beautiful.

Someday when all our support systems fail, then what? Whom will we turn to?

For the answer, let us go back to Gajendra.

Surrender to the Supreme

When Gajendra saw that he had no power to defend himself and that none of his friends, relatives, or wives could help him, he became extremely afraid of being killed. He thought for a long time and finally decided, "It is by the will of providence that I have been attacked by this crocodile, and therefore I shall seek shelter of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is always the shelter of everyone, even of great personalities." (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 8.2.31–32)

Gajendra prayed from his heart, and soon God (Lord Nārāyaṇa, Viṣṇu) manifested right before him. Despite his great pain, Gajendra took a lotus flower in his trunk and with great difficulty offered it to the Lord, who pulled both Gajendra and the crocodile out of the water. Then the Lord severed the crocodile's head with His disc, thus saving Gajendra.

When faced with our own problems, we should consider applying Gajendra's approach—he turned to God. We, too, can find the ultimate shelter. Kṛṣṇa Himself might not come to us, but surely His help will.

A Creation of Calamities

We may feel reluctant to approach God for a solution, and we may want to just wait, either because life is comfortable or because we feel that the current tragedy will not last. But such inertia stems from ignorance of the powerful unseen dynamics that control this world.

The Vedic texts teach us that God creates the material world for us rebellious souls who have turned away from God to enjoy independent of Him. Being a loving father, He has created a place for us to enjoy to our hearts' content. But He wants us to enjoy the best, and not just be happy with the imitation. Therefore, He has employed His representative, Durgā Devī, the supervisor of the material world, to gradually bring us to proper knowledge. Along with advice from scriptures and sages on how to transcend this world and go back to God, we have Durgā Devī's crocodiles biting us—to shake us out of our inertia and make us want to escape this miserable place.

The moment we come to the

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material world these crocodiles have us in their grips. Despite our best hopes and efforts, they won't let go. We can break loose from the crocodile jaws of the material energy only when, like Gajendra, we totally humble ourselves, realizing that we are completely helpless, and then surrender to Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Lord.

We are not aware of our predicament. And even if we sometimes are, we think it will go away. But unless we surrender to Kṛṣṇa, it won't.

Kṛṣṇa, Our Companion In the Darkest Times

In every situation, even the most extreme, Kṛṣṇa is always there to help us. He never lets His devotee down. He is *suhṛdaṁ sarva-bhūtānām:* everyone's best friend. He is right there within our hearts, just waiting to give us a completely blissful life. No matter what we do, no matter what we have done, Kṛṣṇa never leaves us. Who could be a better friend? Birth after birth we have totally betrayed, blasphemed, and rejected Him, but He is still with us. His love is unconditional; He never leaves us. He is always waiting, always willing to give us a chance. At no time will Kṛṣṇa not deliver us, if we just turn to Him, as Gajendra did.

We have to choose the Lord's shelter moment after moment throughout our stay in the material world. At times when the crocodiles are not biting into our flesh, it is easy to forget the Lord. Then our dormant desires to enjoy the illusion raise their heads again. We should learn from Gajendra in this regard. After being liberated, he was not thinking of enjoying again in this world. If that had been his desire, then Kṛṣṇa would have left him here. Kṛṣṇa would have said, "Oh! You want to enjoy here, but there is going to be another crocodile. You are not out of the real crocodile's mouth." But after Gajendra was freed from the crocodile, he didn't want to do anything except serve the Lord, love the Lord. He was so grateful. Kṛṣṇa saw that Gajendra had no material desire, that he had lost all faith in *māyā's* false promises in this world. Therefore, Kṛṣṇa not only freed him from the crocodile, but He put him on an airplane and sent him directly to Vaikuṇṭha, the spiritual world.

The Holy Names: The Only Hope

In this age the holy names of the Lord incarnate to liberate us from the crocodile jaws of the material energy and take us back home to the eternal world of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. So in the spirit of Gajendra, we should learn to surrender to the Lord with a humble and sincere heart—not tomorrow but today. Filled with the spirit of humility and grateful tolerance—whereby we offer all respects to others and expect none for ourselves—we can actually take shelter of the Lord. That's the meaning of "surrender." At a superficial level, "surrender" means doing what you are told. But deep-down surrender means to have the type of humility expressed by Lord Caitanya: "My Lord, I am Yours. You can trample me, embrace me, or break my heart. Whatever situation You put me in, My Lord, I am Yours." (*Śikṣāṣṭaka* 8)

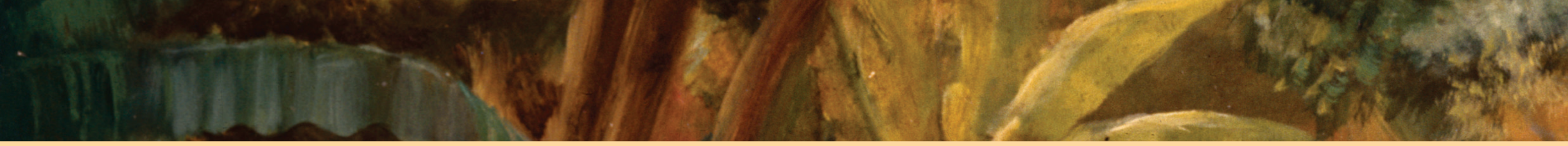
The spirit of Gajendra and the lesson of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* are to welcome adversities and transform them into blessings by sincerely and intensely taking shelter of the holy names of the Lord. Material existence is designed to give us the optimum situation in which we can really, seriously, from our hearts cry out Kṛṣṇa's holy names, following in Gajendra's footsteps. In every situation the crocodile of suffering and death is immanent. Supreme liberation is the rightful claim only for one who takes shelter of the Lord when difficulties come. When setbacks, intrusions, impediments, and disturbances come into our lives, we must welcome them with folded palms and grateful hearts, thinking, "I deserve worse, and this is only a token trouble given by Kṛṣṇa."

Kṛṣṇa is inviting us into His eternal transcendental pastimes for total relief, shelter, and ecstatic joy. Our body will die—today, tomorrow, someday. If we can once take shelter of Kṛṣṇa and sincerely cry out His holy names, we can be delivered. Therefore, all dangers are blessings from Kṛṣṇa, helping us to cry out to Him.

Murāri Gupta Dāsa, a disciple of His Holiness Rādhānātha Swami, has a Bachelor's degree in medicine and surgery (M.B.B.S.) and is part of the production team of the Hindi and English editions of BTG in India. This article was inspired by his guru's lectures on the Gajendra pastime.

DO YOU LIVE FAR FROM A TEMPLE?

There may be Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees near you who hold regular get-togethers or want to start them. We don't have room for these gatherings on the Centers list we print in the magazine, but our online list includes many of them. To find out if there's a regular Kṛṣṇa conscious program near you, or to list your own, log on to Krishna.com and click on "Community">"Krishna Consciousness Society">"Temples and Centers" at the top of the page.



THE ECSTASY OF INSIGNIFICANCE

Our drive for significance in this world reveals our ignorance of the basis of true significance.

By Viśākhā Devī Dāsī

SRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA has written: "Sometimes penance and austerity are executed to attract people and receive honor, respect, and worship from others. Persons in the mode of passion arrange to be worshiped by subordinates and let them wash their feet and offer riches." (*Bhagavad-gītā* 17.18, Purport)

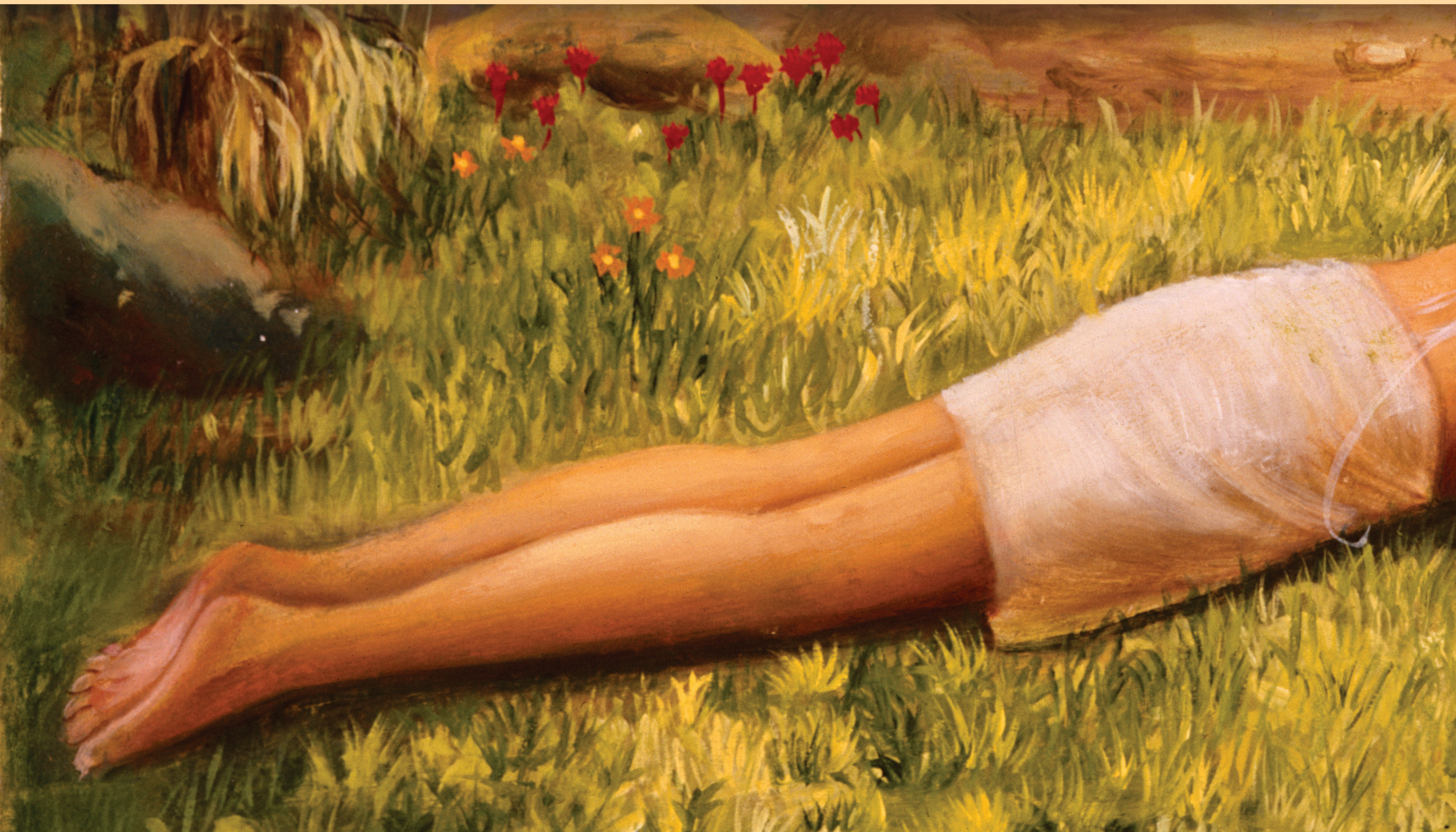
False Significance

Why do we crave to be known, respected, and honored—to be significant? Because we are a tiny part of Kṛṣṇa. Since He is significant, by our inherent nature we are also significant and are meant to live a significant life of genuine meaning and value in accord with our spiritual identity.

A life lived without this kind of significance is a frustrated, unhealthy, wasted life. But since we lack knowledge of our identity, of Kṛṣṇa's identity, and of our relationship with Kṛṣṇa, we try to become significant in the worldly sense. We try to acquire material opulence like wealth, strength, knowledge, beauty, fame, or renunciation, even though all such opulence is irrelevant to us, the soul. It is also temporary, limited, and relative, and it always puts us in competition with others.

Material prominence of any sort is unsatisfying, anxiety-filled, and ultimately insignificant. Yet, misguided in our struggle to regain our God-given significance, we become cogs in an enormous social-economic-political machine and

Illustration: Sanātana Gosvāmī prostrates before Lord Caitanya in a heartfelt display of humility.

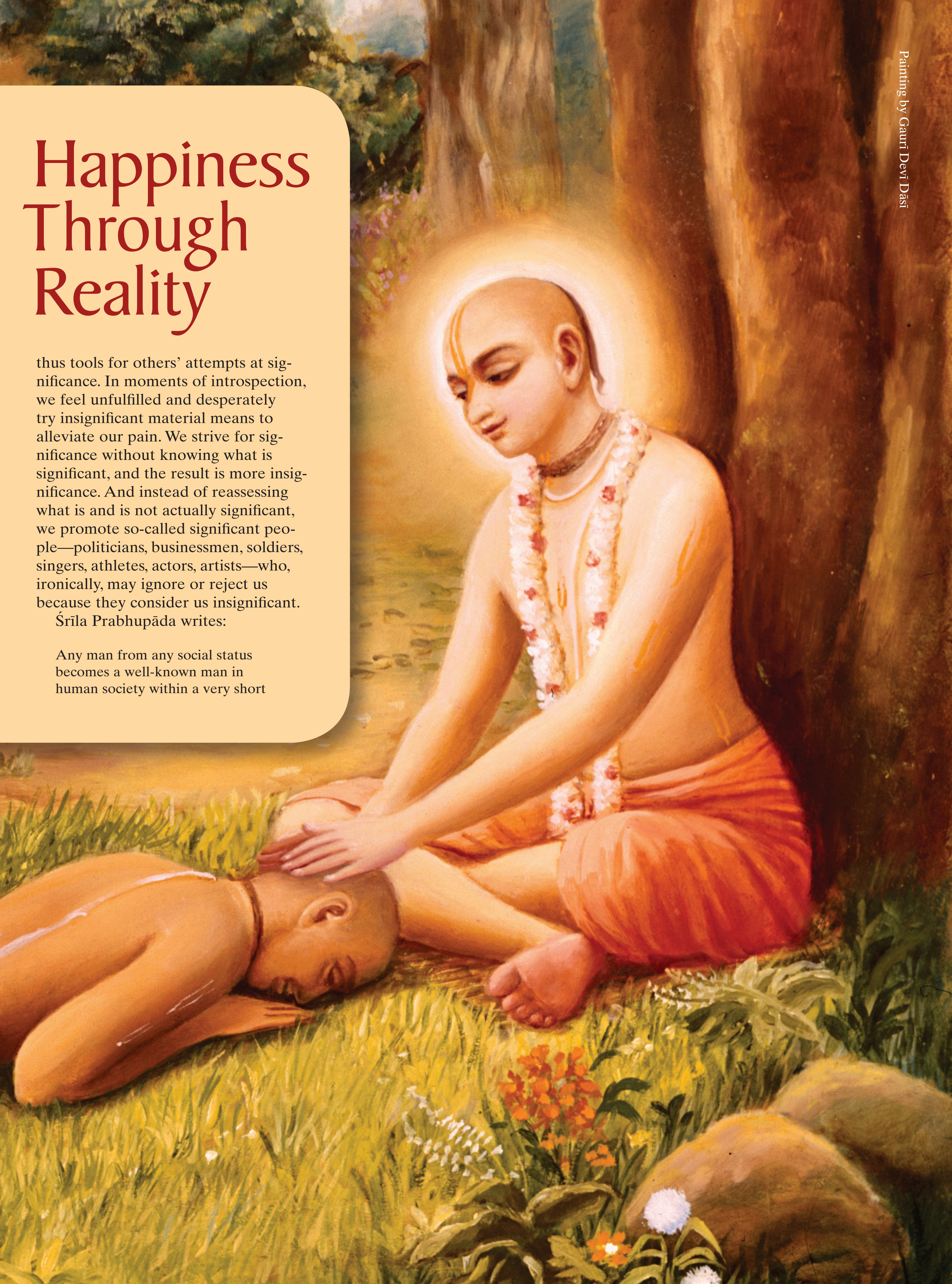


Happiness Through Reality

thus tools for others' attempts at significance. In moments of introspection, we feel unfulfilled and desperately try insignificant material means to alleviate our pain. We strive for significance without knowing what is significant, and the result is more insignificance. And instead of reassessing what is and is not actually significant, we promote so-called significant people—politicians, businessmen, soldiers, singers, athletes, actors, artists—who, ironically, may ignore or reject us because they consider us insignificant.

Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

> Any man from any social status becomes a well-known man in human society within a very short



Painting by Gaurī Devī Dāsī

> time if he is simply glorified truly or falsely in the daily newspapers. Sometimes political leaders of a particular party are also advertised by newspaper propaganda, and by such a method of glorification an insignificant man becomes an important man—within no time. But such propaganda by false glorification of an unqualified person cannot bring about any good, either for the particular man or for the society. There may be some temporary reactions to such propaganda, but there are no permanent effects. Therefore such activities are a waste of time.
>
> (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.2.14, Purport)

Gradually, through the revelation of the deep mystery of our own identity, the illusion that has been making our lives insignificant will end.

Even if I somehow succeed in becoming known, in the core of my being I do not truly believe in such worldly significance, for I know that it is as insubstantial as a bubble in the ocean. I have a niggling suspicion that my (and others') "significance" is a complete and systematic sham, and I promote my own or others' mundane significance at the expense of my inner integrity.

It's not surprising that so many of us are disillusioned and cynical.

Genuine Significance

Who and what is actually significant? Kṛṣṇa, His devotees, and devotional service to Him. By hearing from the spiritual master, the saintly persons, and the scriptures, we can stop mistaking insignificance for significance. Gradually, through the revelation of the deep mystery of our own identity, the illusion that has been making our lives insignificant will end and we will come to a factual, spiritual understanding. Then in spite of all worldly propaganda nothing in this heaving ocean of the material world will seem significant. Devotees of the Lord protest by their whole lives all pompous and trifling masks of significance that parade in this world with their empty authority. In Śrīla Prabhupāda's words, "The highest personality in this material universe is no more significant than an ant for a devotee." (*Bhagavad-gītā* 18.54, Purport)

In this connection there is a relevant passage from the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*Madhya-līlā* 8.246) in which Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself who appears as a devotee of the Lord, asks His intimate associate Rāmānanda Rāya, "Out of all glorious activities, which is the most glorious?" To which Rāmānanda Rāya replies, "That person who is reputed to be a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa enjoys the utmost fame and glory."

Śrīla Prabhupāda comments on this exchange: "The greatest reputation a living being can have is to be a devotee of Kṛṣṇa and to act in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. In the material world everyone is trying to be famous by accumulating a large bank balance or material opulence. There is a steady competition among *karmīs* [materialists] attempting to advance in a wealthy society. The whole world is turning in accordance with that competitive mood. But this kind of name and fame is temporary, for it lasts only as long as the temporary material body exists."

Our personal endeavor cannot gain the significance we seek and need because that significance comes by the mercy of guru and Kṛṣṇa; we receive it when we follow their instructions and when our false ego—our pseudo identity—dies. Then, in humility, we are convinced that all we can reach by our own mundane volition is not quite worth having. Spiritual significance then comes in ways we cannot foresee or determine or demand.

The only true significance is Kṛṣṇa's, and we are truly significant when we freely acknowledge His significance and unify our will with His. At that time our significance is real, creative, and dynamic. True individual significance manifests in devotional life, and the very nature of devotees' activities brings them to this simple, joyful realization. Devotees serve sincerely according to their own capability and capacity and refuse to appear significant through self-promotion and self-aggrandizement. They know that any and all material opulence—including profit, adoration, and distinction—that may lend us temporary significance is not ours at all but the Lord's. Whatever little we may have is simply on loan from Him, and His choosing not to give us something is a display of His mercy.

A Devotee's Example

Genuine significance is not based on one's material qualifications and requires no assertion, but by the Lord's arrangement a devotee who doesn't even want fame may become famous in this world. The history of the fourteenth-century devotee Mādhavendra Purī illustrates this point. Mādhavendra Purī traveled more than a thousand miles from Vrindavan to Orissa to get sandalwood for the deity he worshiped, named Gopāla. When he was visiting a temple in Remuna, Orissa, he desired to taste a preparation that had been offered to the deity, known as Gopīnātha. He wanted to prepare the same dish (sweetened condensed milk boiled with rice) to offer to his Gopāla. Although Mādhavendra Purī didn't reveal his desire to anyone, Gopīnātha appeared to the temple priest in a dream and told the priest to give Mādhavendra Purī a pot of the sweet rice.

> Mādhavendra Purī began to think, "The Lord has given me a pot of sweet rice, and when the people hear of this tomorrow morning, there will be great crowds." Thinking this, Śrī Mādhavendra Purī offered his obeisances to Gopīnātha [Kṛṣṇa] on the spot and left Remuna before morning. . . . When Mādhavendra Purī came to Jagannatha Puri, people were aware of his transcendental reputation. Therefore crowds of people came and offered him all sorts of respect in devotion. Even though one may not like it, reputation, as ordained by providence, comes to him. Indeed, one's transcendental reputation is known throughout the entire world. Being afraid of his reputation [*pratiṣṭhā*], Mādhavendra Purī fled from Remuna. But the reputation brought by love of Godhead is so sublime that it goes along with the devotee, as if following him. Mādhavendra Purī wanted to leave Jagannatha Puri because the people were honoring him as a great devotee; however, this threatened to hinder his collecting sandalwood for the Gopāla deity.
> (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā* 4.141–142, 145–148)

Although Mādhavendra Puri left Remuna to avoid being honored, his service to Gopāla obliged him to remain in Jagannatha Puri, and there he had to tolerate the honor he received.

As one becomes happy not by seeking happiness but by absorbing oneself in devotional service to the Lord for His pleasure, similarly one becomes significant not by seeking significance but by absorbing oneself in devotional service to the Lord for His pleasure.

The Satisfaction of Smallness

Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu prays, "O almighty Lord, I have no desire to accumulate wealth, nor do I desire beautiful women, nor do I want any number of followers or fruitive activities described in flowery language. All I want, life after life, is unmotivated devotional service to You. O son of Nanda, Kṛṣṇa, I am Your eternal servant, yet somehow I have fallen into the ocean of birth and death. Please pick me up from this ocean and place me as one of the atoms at Your lotus feet." (*Śikṣāṣṭaka* 4, 5)

We are capable of being happy in the life Kṛṣṇa has provided for us, in which we contentedly do our devotional service, guided by our spiritual superiors and by Him. Our lives are deeply significant simply by our accepting what is within reach, making of it what we can, and offering it to the Lord with a sincere desire to please Him and His servants. Why can we not be content with this confidential, personal significance that comes by the grace of guru and Kṛṣṇa and does not need to be explained or announced? Why do we feel discontent if we are not significant in some publicly approved way? In *Bhagavad-gītā* (2.44) Kṛṣṇa explains the root cause of our discontent: "In the minds of those who are too attached to sense enjoyment and material opulence, and who are bewildered by such things, the resolute determination for devotional service to the Supreme Lord does not take place." Distracted by our senses and material desires, we miss our real significance and inner satisfaction.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's writes, "Anyone who has any desire or aspiration for satisfying his senses by becoming more and more important, either in the material sense or in the spiritual sense, cannot actually relish the really sweet taste of devotional service." (*The Nectar of Devotion,* Chapter 3)

Similarly, in the words of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, another of our spiritual ancestors, "If I think I am a Vaiṣṇava [a pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa], I shall look forward to receiving respect from others. And if the desire for fame and reputation pollute my heart, I shall certainly go to hell." (*Kalyāṇa-kalpa-taru*)

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Insignificance

By realizing the insignificance of material significance and by acknowledging that each of us is a spirit soul, part of Kṛṣṇa, we discover that we are permanently and genuinely significant. And, enigmatically enough, at that time we feel genuinely insignificant, for we become aware of Kṛṣṇa's greatness and of our own smallness, helplessness, and vulnerability.

Śrīla Prabhupāda explains:

> [Kṛṣṇa's] planet, Goloka Vṛndāvana, is the original planet, and from that planet, that *brahmajyoti,* light, is coming. And in that light, everything is resting. And in an insignificant portion of that light, this material world is situated. In that place there are innumerable universes, as we are seeing one. And in one of these universes there are millions and billions of planets, of which this earth is only an insignificant fragment. And in that earth, the land of America, United States, is still insignificant. And in the United States, the state of New York is still insignificant. And in the state of New York, New York City is insignificant. And in New York City, this 26 Second Avenue is insignificant. And we are sitting here. So just see how insignificant we are.
>
> (Lecture, New York City, December 7, 1966)

Śrīla Prabhupāda spent one month crossing the Atlantic on his first trip to America. He suffered seasickness and heart attacks. Before he disembarked, he wrote a prayer to the Lord, appealing for His help in offering Kṛṣṇa consciousness to Westerners. He signed the prayer, "the most unfortunate, insignificant beggar A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami."

Prabhupāda was perpetually humbled by the unimaginable greatness and incomparable perfection of Kṛṣṇa, and he perpetually felt himself an insignificant servant of the Lord. Still, in his mindfulness of the Lord he was materially and spiritually fulfilled, for he had Kṛṣṇa, and whoever has Kṛṣṇa wants nothing. And Prabhupāda could simultaneously see and love the significance within each of us while showing us our insignificance before Kṛṣṇa.

The more we deny our insignificance, the more we are impelled to be materially significant, which is to have no factual significance at all. The Lord's gift to us, the gift of truth, is to doubt our importance, to allow our instinctive appetite for insignificance to emerge, to resolutely realize our insignificance before Kṛṣṇa, and to refrain from the temptation to be materially significant. We may receive that gift or reject it.

Understanding our insignificance is not an outward gesture but an inner awakening; it is purification. If we choose to accept our insignificance, then although we may be surrounded by materially significant people, we advance spiritually because of Lord Kṛṣṇa's support. Queen Kuntī prays, "My Lord, Your Lordship can easily be approached, but only by those who are materially exhausted. One who is on the path of [material] progress, trying to improve himself with respectable parentage, great opulence, high education, and bodily beauty, cannot approach You with sincere feeling." (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.8.26) Humility accepts insignificance; pride rejects it.

Realizing our insignificance will help us fulfill our irrepressible, life-giving aspiration to know Kṛṣṇa. When we have understood and unhesitatingly accepted our insignificance, special grace in our devotional life will enable us to happily engage in His work. Rather than worrying about our image, we will be absorbed in our service.

Humility means awareness of our own insignificance along with respect for the worth of others. In the words of Lord Caitanya, "One who thinks himself lower than the grass, who is more tolerant than a tree, and who does not expect personal honor yet is always prepared to give all respect to others can very easily always chant the holy name of the Lord." (*Śikśāṣṭaka* 3)

Humility is essential for pure chanting, the central practice of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Lord Caitanya's devotee par excellence Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura taught by his example how to chant the holy names

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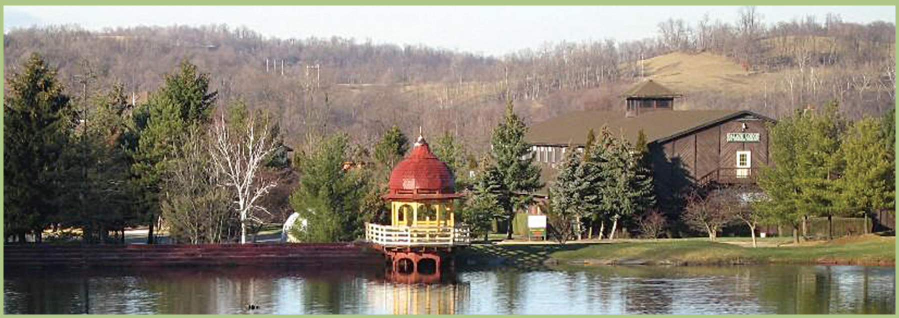

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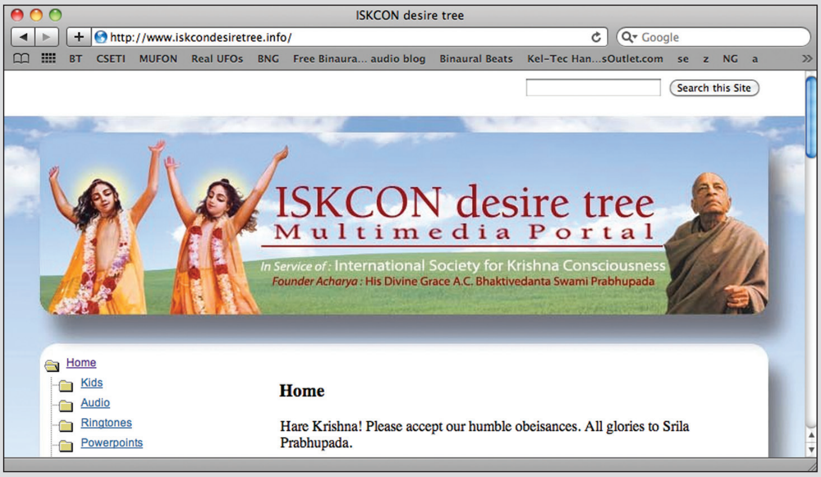
e-Krishna

Profiles of Kṛṣṇa-related websites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Hare Krishna! Please accept our humble obeisances. All glories to Srila Prabhupada.

ISKCON Desire Tree—(**www.iskcondesiretree.info**) is a multimedia portal in the service of Kṛṣṇa's devotees. Like the desire trees in Kṛṣṇa's abode, whatever Kṛṣṇa conscious multimedia one wishes to see is manifest on this website.

"We have audio, video, power point files, comics, posters, images, games, quizzes, recipes, screensavers, greetings, ring tones, books, emagazines, and more," says website manager Vaiṣṇava Sevā Dāsa. "And we're happy to serve devotees by offering them free services like poster design for temples, congregations, and devotees."

The ISKCON Desire Tree website has clean and simple navigation, making it easy for you to find everything.

"The most popular section is audio," Vaiṣṇava Sevā says, "but all our content gets a lot of downloads."

The site even contains an "Ask the Doctor" section, an online service designed to connect devotees all over world with doctors and health professionals. Vaiṣṇava Sevā Dāsa, a doctor, is one of the founders of Bhaktivedanta Hospital in Mumbai.

The idea for the multimedia site came about in 2002 when Vaiṣṇava Sevā Dāsa and a few other devotees received permission from Rādhānātha Swami to start a small web page containing audio of his lectures.

"Someone suggested we make the lectures of other ISKCON speakers available on the web too," says Vaiṣṇava Seva Dāsa. "So I gradually started to post lectures by other devotees."

As the website grew, Vaiṣṇava Sevā began to hire devotees to develop further content.

"I gradually had to buy more computers," he says. "Because I had to closely supervise the development, I started the website office in the living room of my small apartment."

Now ISKCON Desire Tree has more than forty-two thousand files for you to download and enjoy. It has received more than one million Internet visitors.

"We receive a lot of feedback too," Vaiṣṇava Sevā says. "Devotees write to thank us for our efforts, which makes us feel indebted to serve them even more. Our mood is to be the servant of the servants."

—*Antony Brennan*

of Kṛṣṇa. He revealed his mood of deep humility in these words to Lord Caitanya: "My Lord, if an insignificant insect like me dies, what is the loss? If an ant dies, where is the loss to the material world?" (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Antya-līlā* 11.41)

Higher Realms

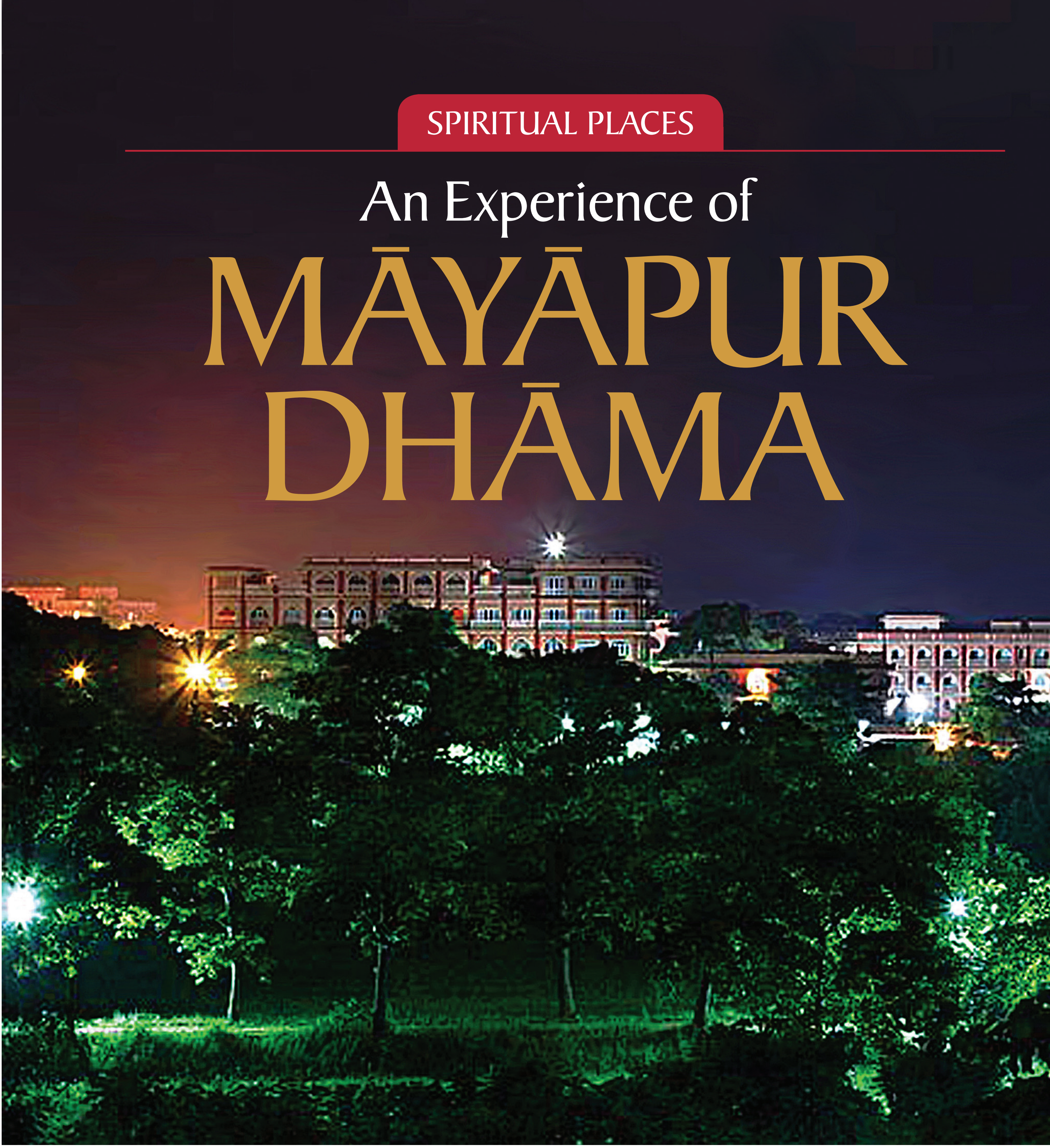
A feeling of insignificance and a humble service attitude come not by astuteness, not by knowing some tricks, but by simple steadfastness in the process of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (3.21.21) tells us that Kṛṣṇa showers all benedictions on those who consider themselves insignificant. Seeing them as significant, by His causeless mercy He shares with them the sweetness of devotional service.

Insignificance is so inconceivably ecstatic that the Lord Himself desires it, as Śrīla Prabhupāda describes: "Kṛṣṇa says in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta,* you will find, 'Everyone worships Me with awe and veneration. But if anyone worships Me without any awe, veneration, and treats Me as insignificant, I like that. I like that.' So that exchange of Kṛṣṇa's feelings you can find in this Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava philosophy—that mother Yaśodā is treating Kṛṣṇa as very insignificant. 'He is my child. If I don't give Him protection, He will die.' Therefore Kṛṣṇa is very much obliged to mother Yaśodā." (Lecture, New York City, April 10, 1973) ❁

Viśākhā Devī Dāsī has been contributing articles and photographs to BTG for more than thirty years. She and her husband, Yaduvara Dāsa, have lived at Saranagati Village, a Hare Kṛṣṇa community in British Columbia, Canada, since 1999.

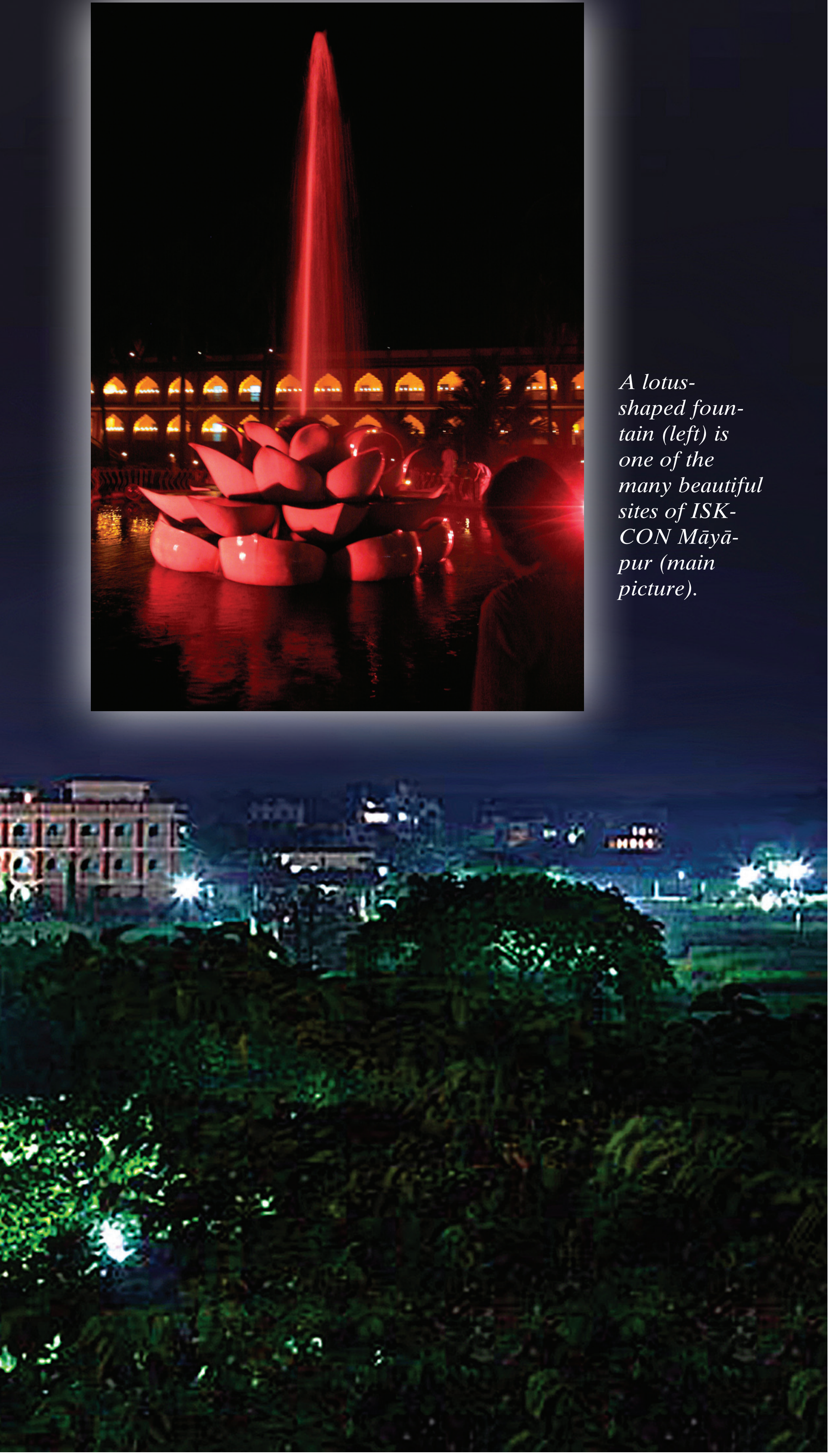
SPIRITUAL PLACES

An Experience of MĀYĀPUR DHĀMA



A pilgrimage to ISKCON's grand complex in Lord Caitanya's land provides indelible inspiration for an engineer and his family.

By N. Swaminathan, Ph.D.



A lotus-shaped fountain (left) is one of the many beautiful sites of ISKCON Māyāpur (main picture).

Vṛndāvana-līlā Devī Dāsī (2)

WHEN I ENTERED the spacious temple and looked to the right, I was stunned on seeing the huge and extremely beautiful deities of Rādhā-Mādhava, with four sakhīs *on each side gazing at the perfect beauty of Lord Mādhava and Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and very eager to serve Them. The temple was full of devotees offering ghee lamps, an act that symbolizes how our heart burns in separation from Kṛṣṇa. My family and I also got ghee lamps and offered them to Rādhā-Mādhava and the eight* sakhīs.

We then went to the adjoining hall, also spacious. When I saw the huge golden Pañca Tattva deities, I couldn't imagine ever having to leave Māyāpur. The devotees' graceful dancing and the beautiful kīrtana *enchanted me. And before I could recover, I was in front of the deity of Nṛsiṁha. Dressed in silver, He looked like silver fire. He was so ferocious, and yet so assuring. I don't remember how many times I offered obeisances to Him, or maybe I didn't at all.*

Thank you, Śrīla Prabhupāda. Even though you were satisfied with whatever Kṛṣṇa provided to you, you undertook great hardships to create such a beautiful place and a real society of devotees so that people like me would be attracted to spiritual life.

I work in an engineering software company, and I had been attending a *Bhagavad-gītā* class conducted by ISKCON for four months when our teacher invited my family and me for a four-day pilgrimage to Māyāpur during the auspicious month of Dāmodara (Kārttika). Māyāpur is the birthplace of Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who in the sixteenth century propagated the chanting of the holy names of Kṛṣṇa, the recommended spiritual practice for Kali-yuga, the current age.

Our reception at ISKCON Māyāpur's Gada Bhavan was most magnificent. We were garlanded with flowers, and cool sandalwood paste was applied to our foreheads. This is how guests are received in the Vaiṣṇava tradition, said our hosts.

The next day we got up really early and bathed in unheated water. We attended *maṅgala-ārati* at Prabhupāda's Pushpa Samadhi and

This article contains quite a few names and words that may be unfamiliar to some readers. To avoid breaking the flow of the article with explanations, we decided to provide a glossary (see pages 33–35). The words are in the order of their appearance in the article.

Kaivalya Sundarī Devī Dāsī

then at the Rādhā-Mādhava temple. I completed sixteen rounds of chanting before 7:00 A.M., and I had a full day ahead of me.

While walking to the *goshala,* we were shown the *gṛhastha* quarters and a building that's home to *brahmacārīs* two months a year. The rest of the year they are out traveling in buses and distributing Prabhupāda's books. We also were told about four schools: one with the CBSE pattern,

Looking out from the guesthouse known as "the long building," guests can see fountains, gardens, and the two guesthouses (left) that frame the entrance to the temple, where Rādhā-Mādhava and the eight gopīs *(below) reside. At right, guests tour the grounds in an ox-powered trolley.*

ভ্রাম্যমান গরুর গাড়ীতে ইস্কন দর্শন করুন

Kaivalya Sundarī Devī Dāsī

Vrindavan Lila Dasi photography
www.remembermayapur.com

Vṛndāvana-līlā Devī Dāsī

one with the Cambridge Board, one a girls' school, and one a Vedic *gurukula.* The first three have a mixed curriculum, modern with Vedic, but the last is purely Vedic. We were surprised. What about the future of these boys? We learned the answer, a very instructive one, when we went to the *gurukula* in the evening.

The *goshala* has four sections: for old cows, younger cows, calves, and bulls. We had *kīrtana* and a wonderful lesson on the importance of cow protection and cow's milk. Bāla Govinda Dāsa, our guide and teacher, also told us that Caitanya Mahāprabhu is not a great saint but the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself. To make the best of this pilgrimage, he advised us to (a) abstain from *prajalpa,* or useless mundane talk, (b) chant as much as possible, (c) listen very carefully to the glories of this place, and (d) maximize our association with the devotees.

We felt great honor in feeding the calves with straw and date-sugar balls. The children enjoyed this a great deal. I was thankful to Lord Kṛṣṇa for His being as accessible and loving to children as to adults. I remembered our visits to many South Indian temples when

SRI SWANANDA
SRILA BHAKTI VINODE
TIR

Chandrika Balkheimer

the children got bored and we couldn't sustain their enthusiasm. But in Māyāpur it was different. The children woke up the parents because they were eager to start the day early.

The evening took us to the Vedic *gurukula.* The students learn Vedic mathematics, English (and through it, other languages, including Sanskrit), music, martial arts, Vedic mantras, Vaiṣṇava texts, and leadership and organizational skills. They do menial tasks such as cooking, cleaning, washing clothes, and filling water containers. They use only oil lamps at night and cook with cow dung as fuel. We asked them if they worried about their future. They are completely cut off from current affairs and modern education. Even their Vedic degree is not recognized outside ISKCON. What if they decide to do something outside ISKCON?

The answers we got, in the form of rhetorical questions, were an eye-opener: What do we need a job for? Do we trust our boss more or Kṛṣṇa more? How did Prabhupāda manage in the U.S. with no money? How does a dog survive without current affairs and degrees? How does an ant get its food? Are we worse than dogs or ants?

The answers showed us the depth of these boys' faith and the shallowness of ours. How can Kṛṣṇa reciprocate with us when we have no faith in Him? That made us worry. And indeed, by Kṛṣṇa's mercy these boys become *gurukula* teachers, run establishments, and assume important roles that require relational and managerial skills rather than academic degrees.

The next day, after *maṅgala-ārati* we saw a diorama exhibition of Lord Caitanya's pastimes. Then we walked along the road outside the temple campus to board a boat to one of the islands in Navadvīpa.

Out of respect for this holy land, I stopped carrying my mobile phone and started walking barefoot, feeling nourished by the cool Māyāpur sand under my bare feet.

Godruma-dvīpa

The boat glided on the whitish Ganga, which met the Jalangi, dark like the Yamuna. On the Jalangi shore we formed a *saṅkīrtana* party as we walked to Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's house on the island of Godruma-dvīpa. We learnt that he had started life in a modest manner and later rose from clerk to magistrate. He was extremely punctual and efficient and thus was respected by the British. To convince him to postpone his retirement, they built a railway line just to ferry him to and from his office. He was the father of at least ten children. He wrote prolifically in Bengali to bring people the rich Vedic texts in the form of poems and songs. He discovered the birthplace of Lord Caitanya and built a temple there by collecting mostly small donations from the local people. He eventually organized two thousand village groups for practicing and spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He is an inspirational, ideal *gṛhastha.*

The name of this island (*dvīpa*) comes from the words *go* (cow) and *druma* (tree). Long ago, Surabhi, the mother of all cows, performed austerities under a banyan tree here to please Lord Viṣṇu. In another incident associated with this sacred place, the sage Mārkaṇḍeya once wanted to see Lord Kṛṣṇa's *māyā,* or illusory potency. Fulfilling the sage's request, Kṛṣṇa flooded the entire world. Mārkaṇḍeya was washed away but landed safely at Godruma-dvīpa, the only place above water. There he saw a beautiful baby on a banyan leaf, sucking His own toe. The baby was Kṛṣṇa, who wanted to experience the taste of His own lotus feet, a taste that steals the hearts of all devotees and great sages. Suddenly, the baby sucked the sage into His stomach, in which the entire universe was visible, and just as suddenly expelled him. Thus Mārkaṇḍeya saw how the entire universe is contained within Lord Kṛṣṇa while He is simultaneously aloof from it.

We then returned by boat with a stopover for bathing in the Ganga. Mother Ganga flows from the feet of Kṛṣṇa and is very sacred. People with material eyes cannot see the purity of the Ganga and the spiritual benefits she can provide. We prayed for Mother Ganga's permission before entering, and while bathing we prayed that her pure water might cleanse our hearts of impuri-

Kaivalya Sundarī Devī Dāsī

ISKCON Māyāpur sits near the confluence of two beautiful rivers, the Jalangi and the Ganges (background). At right, devotees take boats to visit holy sites nearby, including the home of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura (top left).

Yamarāja Dāsa

ties, which stand in the way of reviving our original Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The children had a wonderful time in the cool water, and we had a tough time getting them out.

Prabhupāda's Samādhī

In the evening we visited Prabhupāda's *samādhi.* Its circular shape allows many people at once to view Prabhupāda sitting majestically on his altar. Inside the dome, tile mosaics depict various landmark events in Prabhupāda's life. I was touched by the picture of him guiding an American child in writing a Sanskrit letter. On the first floor are dioramas depicting Prabhupāda's life—his own Rathayātrā at age four, writing his heartfelt poem expressing his full surrender to Kṛṣṇa as he reached America, his first public *kīrtana* in the U.S., and so on. At an advanced age, in a foreign land, with almost no money or support, he transformed misguided American youth into spiritual practitioners and leaders, established more than a hundred temples all over the world, and produced dozens of books based on Vaiṣṇava philosophy. How could he do all this? Because he had faith in his guru and Kṛṣṇa.

After *maṅgala-ārati* the next morning, we offered our obeisances to the Pañca Tattva and thanked them for allowing us to enter the *dhāma.* We prayed for their grace to help us steadily progress in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. We begged forgiveness for any offenses we may have committed during our pilgrimage. And we requested their permission to leave the *dhāma.*

Yoga-pīṭha

From the ISKCON complex, a bus took us a short distance to the birth-

Kaivalya Sundarī Devī Dāsī

place of Lord Caitanya, known as Yoga-pīṭha. The deities here are Rādha-Mādhava; Caitanya Mahāprabhu with His consorts (Viṣṇupriyā and Lakṣmīpriyā); Śrī Jagannātha Miśra and Śacī Devī, Lord Caitanya's parents; and the Adhokṣaja (Viṣṇu) deity worshiped by Lord Caitanya's parents and discovered by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura while the temple foundation was being dug.

After spending some time at Yoga-pīṭha, we prayed to Lord Caitanya for love of Kṛṣṇa and left for ISKCON's Jagannātha temple in Sīmanta-dvīpa, a little farther up the road. Before entering the temple we heard from Murāri Dāsa about the appearance of Jagannātha, Baladeva, and Subhadrā there, and how the temple came under the care of ISKCON. The place gives devotees the same spiritual benefit as visiting the Jagannātha temple in Puri. The island's name refers to a time when Goddess Pārvatī prayed here to Lord Caitanya. When the Lord appeared, she put the dust from under His feet on the part (*sīmanta*) of her hair.

The spacious temple includes deities of Lord Caitanya and His four principal associates (left), and Lord Nṛsiṁha (below). At bottom, pilgrims take blessings from flaming wicks that have been offered to the deities.

Dvija Priyā Devī Dāsī

Vṛndāvana-līlā Devī Dāsī

Dvija Priyā Devī Dāsī

Bhaktividyāpūrṇa Swami talks with Dṛdha-vrata Dāsa inside the gurukula *(boys boarding school) compound (left). Below, boys from the school create a festival decoration with dyed rice flour.*

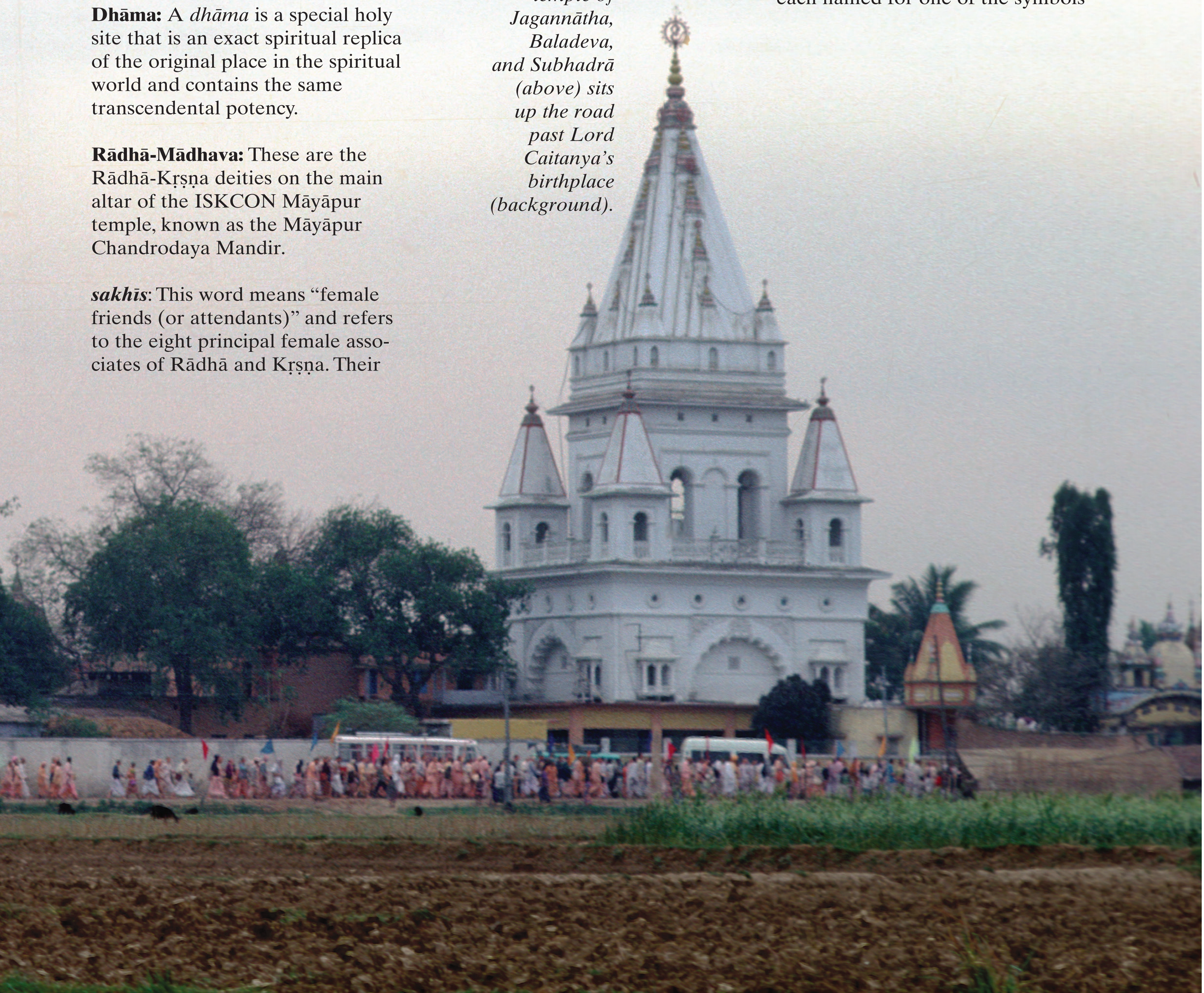
Back in Kolkata, I realized that Māyāpur is an example of how one can live a completely spiritual life right here in the material world. “O Lord!” I prayed. “When can I return to Māyāpur?” And I recalled the caption I’d seen under a picture of ISKCON Māyāpur’s Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava: “Meet your new boss.”

N. Swaminathan has a Ph.D. in structural optimization from IIT, Delhi. He lives with his wife and their two children in Pune.

Kaivalya Sundarī Devī Dāsī

Kaivalya Sundarī Devī Dāsī

ISKCON's temple of Jagannātha, Baladeva, and Subhadrā (above) sits up the road past Lord Caitanya's birthplace (background).



Viśākhā Devī Dāsī

GLOSSARY

Dhāma: A *dhāma* is a special holy site that is an exact spiritual replica of the original place in the spiritual world and contains the same transcendental potency.

Rādhā-Mādhava: These are the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa deities on the main altar of the ISKCON Māyāpur temple, known as the Māyāpur Chandrodaya Mandir.

sakhīs: This word means "female friends (or attendants)" and refers to the eight principal female associates of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Their names are Lalitā, Viśākhā, Campakalatā, Citra, Tuṅgavidyā, Indulekhā, Raṅgadevī, and Sudevī.

Pañca-tattva: Literally "five truths," this is the name given to Lord Caitanya (who is Lord Kṛṣṇa in the mood of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī) and His four main associates: Nityānanda Prabhu (Balarāma), Advaita Ācārya (Mahā-Viṣṇu), Gadādhara (Rādhārāṇī), and Śrīvāsa (Nārada Muni).

Nṛsiṁha: In the Māyāpur Chandrodaya Mandir, Lord Nṛsiṁha, Kṛṣṇa's half-man, half-lion incarnation, has His own sanctuary and receives opulent worship.

Gada Bhavan: One of ISKCON Māyāpur's four main guesthouses, each named for one of the symbols

Vṛndāvana-līlā Devī Dāsī

of Lord Viṣṇu: Gadā (club), Cakra (disc), Śankha (conch), and Padma (lotus).

maṅgala-ārati: The first worship ceremony of the day, at 4:30 A.M. in most ISKCON temples.

Pushpa Samadhi: Literally "flower tomb," this refers to Prabhupāda's memorial tomb/temple, which contains flowers (*puṣpa*) taken from his body when he passed away. His body is entombed in Vrindavan.

goshala: A place where cows are taken care of.

gṛhastha: A married couple.

brahmacārī: Celibate male devotees, especially those living in an ashram under strict discipline.

CBSE: Central Board of Secondary Education (India's government school board).

Cambridge Board: an examination board connected with Cambridge University that sets examinations and awards qualifications for fourteen-to-nineteen-year-olds.

gurukula: A traditional Vedic boarding school for boys that focuses on spiritual subjects.

Kaivalya Sundarī Devī Dāsī

Cows from the goshala make an appearance to get honored at a festival (left).

Navadvīpa: Māyāpur sits at the center of a sacred area known as Navadvīpa ("nine islands"), which is spiritually conceptualized as a lotus with eight petals, with Māyāpur (Antardvīpa) as the whorl of the lotus.

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura: the guru and father of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, who was Śrīla Prabhupāda's guru.

IIT: Indian Institute of Technology.

Bas-reliefs grace the outside of Prabhupāda's Pushpa Samadhi (right), whose dome can be seen from miles around (background).

Kaivalya Sundarī Devī Dāsī

In your own

What memorable visit to the temple inspired you in a special way?

My most memorable temple visit was my first.

I walked into the temple and felt like I had stepped into another world, and though I knew next to nothing about Kṛṣṇa or devotees, I had an instant feeling of somehow being home. There was beautiful music, colors, sounds, and smells, all unfamiliar but familiar at the same time—like a forgotten memory rising to the surface. But most of all it was the devotees, with their instant friendship, kindness, and desire to teach knowledge of Kṛṣṇa without force or pressure, that really left its mark on me.

I left that day with *tulasī* beads, a picture of Kṛṣṇa given to me by a devotee, and an overwhelming feeling of being purified. That was two years ago, and I've been a devotee ever since.

Anna Mace
London

During my very first visit to Vrindavan,

the ecstatic *saṅkīrtana* along with the *abhiṣeka* [deity bathing] ceremony awakened my dormant love for Kṛṣṇa and inspired me to reestablish my original, eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa.

Rupin Takkar
Rohtak, Haryana, India

It was 1992, when I had started going to a small ISKCON center

that had just opened in Austin. The devotees at the center were very enthusiastic to expose the congregation to various ISKCON festivals, so they took us to the nearest ISKCON temple, located in Houston, for Govardhana Pūjā. This was going to be our first exposure to the festival, and we did not know what to expect.

Most of us knew the history of how Kṛṣṇa asked His foster father to worship Govardhana Hill instead of Lord Indra, which led to Kṛṣṇa's lifting Govardhana Hill on His tiny finger for seven days to protect

Yamarāja Dāsa

During one of the most memorable functions at all ISKCON centers (here in New York City), devotees greet the deities in the

words . . .

Pentip photo: Andrea Leone | Agency: Dreamstime.com

the Vrajavāsīs from the heavy rain sent by Indra. At the temple what impressed us most was the huge number of offerings to Śrī Govardhana, who is Kṛṣṇa Himself. None of us, including the devotees who brought us to Houston, expected so many offerings. We were completely surprised. We were told that this is the only festival when anyone can bring food items for Kṛṣṇa, in the form of Govardhana Hill, and He will accept the offering.

We saw how the devotees were enthusiastic, dedicated, and in a festive mood. The whole atmosphere was inspiring and contagious.

This visit to the Houston ISKCON temple strengthened my faith in Kṛṣṇa and ISKCON devotees. It also inspired me to learn more and get involved more in the Kṛṣṇa conscious activities at our local center. Over the years, I have learned a lot and continue learning more by reading Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, chanting the *mahā-mantra,* and associating with devotees at ISKCON temples wherever I go.

Vaikuṇṭheśvara Bālājī Dāsa
Austin, Texas

morning with music, song, and dance.

I was on a school geography trip in downtown London

last year and desired to visit the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temple after we were dismissed from the trip.

Later that day during the evening rush period, although there were huge crowds of people packed in the underground or walking swiftly across the streets, I felt ironically alone. Soon after, my ears were filled with the nectar I was desperately hankering for, as the sound of small handheld cymbals accompanied by the familiar Hare Kṛṣṇa chant signaled the shortening proximity of my destination. After receiving kind instructions from a devotee named Adam, I arrived at the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temple feeling hugely enthused and happy to be part of a culture that I can never become lost or alone in.

Yash Karia
London

During an extended business trip, I visited an ISKCON center

in a mid-size city on the east coast of America. The temple has deities of Jagannātha, Baladeva, and Subhadrā and consistently has one of the most opulent Sunday feasts in the country. Śrī Jagannātha mercifully gave me the service to wash the Sunday feast cooking pots and pans for a few weeks. Through this activity, the Lord began the process of washing my heart. I got the realization through this service that we are always eager for prestige, adoration, and respect, and for being the center. And because we are interested in loving our own selves only, we never really turn to God or His devotees with love.

Vikas Shah
Bloomington, Illinois

Because there is no temple in Milwaukee, Wisconsin,

where I live, each visit to the Chicago temple is memorable for me. I am inspired in a special way whenever I go and see the deities and am able to do service for Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. I also cherish going to the Rathayātrā festival in Chicago and seeing devotees from other cities.

I like to go for other festivals when I am able. At the temple I like to listen to the lectures on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.* It also gives me time to chant on my beads and to associate with the devotees.

I like to go help with preaching if the devotees want me to do that. Or I help with cooking or make garlands for the deities. Most of all, I'm inspired just being there to see the deities of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

Ārati Devī Dāsī
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

HERE'S THE NEXT QUESTION:

Which pastime of Lord Caitanya inspires you the most, and why?

Go to Krishna.com/inyourownwords and let us know. Please keep your answer to under 150 words. Replies will appear in our Jan/Feb 2011 issue. Deadline for submissions is Oct 1.

MOTIVATION

SOMEHOW, it happens that our motivation in Kṛṣṇa consciousness may falter. Usually that faltering comes in the form of lacking the desire to do some practical service, associate with devotees, or develop our spiritual practices, such as improving the quality or quantity of our chanting or of our reading of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books. Whenever this happens to me or a friend, I realize the urgency and fragility of devotional service and the importance of remaining inspired. How can we proactively and practically manage our own level of motivation in our devotional lives? How can we inspire ourselves and others in moments when our inspiration is lacking? This article humbly attempts to provide practical insights into how to maintain one's enthusiasm and motivation in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Chant in the Morning

"There never seems to be enough time in the day."

Quite honestly, besides the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra this is my other daily mantra.

Some years ago a devotee whose advice I value told me to "just try" to chant sixteen rounds on my beads every day, and specifically in the morning before leaving home. If I were able to do so, he said, Kṛṣṇa would clear a path for me: My day would be increasingly efficient, and I would find extra time in the evenings for other devotional activities. I've since also discovered that feeling stressed or overwhelmed about daily tasks occupies much more time than we realize. Chanting in the morning helps clear the mind and thus makes us far more focused and productive throughout the day. The same devotee also told me that the material world is one of exploitation and deceit, and chanting in the morning places a protective shield around us that prevents others from hurting us.

Considering the copious amount of time we make for so many people and activities in a given day, why not make some time for the most important person, Lord Kṛṣṇa, at the onset of our day—to talk to Him, associate with Him, and tell Him we care about Him? Whether for ten minutes or two hours, beginning the day by associating intimately with Kṛṣṇa is incredibly sublime. Chanting our rounds is the basis for a spiritual day. Committing to a certain amount of chanting each day will help maintain and increase our motivation in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If we can try to chant in the morning, we stand an even better chance. While it may sound overly simplistic, chanting is the answer

Puṣkara Dāsa talks to guests about Kṛṣṇa consciousness at a festival in St. Augustine, Florida.

in Kṛṣṇa Consciousness

Some suggestions on how to stay inspired. By Rashi Singh

Yamarāja Dāsa

to everything. There's a reason Śrīla Prabhupāda coined the phrase "Chant and be happy." And as far as possible, finish those rounds in the morning.

Remember that Kṛṣṇa Is a Person

Perhaps this too sounds overly simplistic.

When we want to express affection for a friend or family member, we try to cultivate and nourish our relationship by expressing love and service through multiple acts of kindness, affection, and love. At every moment of every day Kṛṣṇa is expressing His kindness, affection, and love for us. He is the friend who longs for us to associate with Him. He is with us always, willing us to Him. But to love Him is to exercise our free will. He can't force us to love Him, because it takes the nectar and sweetness out of the relationship.

If you've ever put more effort into a relationship than you've received, then you know that this is a painful position. When you feel unmotivated, try to think about how much Kṛṣṇa has blessed you with, and how little He asks for in return. Remember that He is your friend, longing for a loving reciprocal relationship with you. If we just pay some attention to Him daily through chanting and other services, we will feel His reciprocation. One of the best ways to keep the desire to know Kṛṣṇa better is to serve and associate with His devotees. They provide much inspiration by being naturally happy, devoted, and loving. Śrīla Prabhupāda has provided us with a home within which to take advantage of their association.

Scrub a Floor

Yes. Scrub a floor.

Śrīla Prabhupāda said that cleaning the temple floor will clean the heart. When we feel unenthusiastic in our Kṛṣṇa consciousness, rendering menial service, particularly in the association of devotees, can have a profound effect.

Viśākhā Devī Dāsī

Before the Rathayātrā festival in Jagannatha Puri, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and His associates would clean every nook and corner of the Gundicha temple, where Jagannātha, Baladeva, and Subhadrā spend a week as part of the festival. With meticulous attention to detail, Caitanya Mahāprabhu and His associates cleaned the temple with deep love and determination.

In the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* Prabhupāda explains how the cleansing of the Gundicha temple is a metaphor for the cleansing of our own hearts:

> To give us practical instructions, Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu cleansed the temple twice. His second cleansing was more thorough. The idea was to throw away all the stumbling blocks on the path of devotional service. . . .
>
> By His practical activity, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu informed us how to cleanse our hearts. . . . The Lord was very pleased with those who could cleanse the temple by taking out undesirable things accumulated within. This is called *anartha-nivṛtti,* cleansing the heart of all unwanted things. Thus the cleansing of the Guṇḍicā-mandira was conducted by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu to let us know how the heart should be cleansed and soothed to receive Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa and

Devotees find inspiration in distributing prasādam *because they understand its spiritual benefits.*

> enable Him to sit within the heart without disturbance.
>
> *Śrī Caitanya Caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā* 12.135, Purport

Menial service has a profound effect. Whether the service is washing dishes, cutting vegetables, or scrubbing the temple floor, it will transform our hearts and minds and thus make us more receptive to the mercy always available to us. And there's an added benefit: Menial service in the association of devotees strengthens relationships with those devotees in real, perceptible ways that leave us feeling loved. Our inspiration to reciprocate with them and other devotees will keep us protected, motivated, and grounded in our Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Share—Anyway, Anyhow

Sharing what you know about Kṛṣṇa consciousness is a truly transcendental experience. Share *prasādam,* distribute books, or share whatever you know, no matter how little you think it might be. The knowledge you share will strengthen for you, and you will help others discover their own relationship with Kṛṣṇa. When that happens you will feel Śrīla Prabhupāda's and Kṛṣṇa's reciprocation immediately. What better way to stay motivated? To share Kṛṣṇa consciousness, on a small or larger scale, is both inspiring and humbling. Give it a try, and you'll see your enthusiasm and motivation in Kṛṣṇa consciousness multiply.

Keep a Journal

Writing can be an extremely effective and powerful tool for reflecting on our realizations and motivation. Many devotees enjoy regularly writing letters to Śrīla Prabhupāda or Kṛṣṇa. It is a sweet, simple activity that will bolster your relationship with Kṛṣṇa. Writing honestly and sharing their thoughts on paper is a therapeutic motivational exercise for many devotees.

Maintain an Attitude Of Gratitude

A moment's reflection on what Śrīla Prabhupāda has given us will ensure that we carry out our devotional service with proper gratitude and motivation. Gratitude is a powerful instrument: It breeds sincerity and a concentrated effort to progress in our spiritual life.

Just Try

These are some small but practical methods we can apply in maintaining and increasing our motivation in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. To feel unmotivated at times is natural. But if we can use those times as opportunities to grow and go deeper in our spiritual life, we will emerge stronger and even more inspired to engage in devotional service. "Just try." We only have everything to gain.

Rashi Singh, a management consultant, lives and works in Toronto, Canada.

CALENDAR

This calendar is calculated for Māyāpur, West Bengal, India. The dates, derived from a lunar calendar, may vary by one day for other locations. For the exact dates for your area, go to ***www.krishnadays.com****.*

Because the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement comes in disciplic line from Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the calendar includes not only dates relevant to all followers of the Vedic tradition but also dates relating to Lord Caitanya's associates and prominent spiritual masters in His disciplic succession.

August 25–September 23

(*Month of Hṛṣīkeśa*)

SEPTEMBER

2—Śrī Kṛṣṇa Janmāṣṭamī, appearance anniversary of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Fasting till midnight. Call your local Hare Kṛṣṇa temple for a schedule of events.

3—Appearance anniversary of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, Founder-*Ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. Fasting till noon, followed by feasting.

5—Annadā Ekādaśī
Fasting from grains and beans.

12—Appearance anniversary of Śrīmatī Sītā Devī, the consort of Śrīla Advaita Ācārya.

15—Śrī Rādhāṣṭamī, appearance anniversary of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, Lord Kṛṣṇa's eternal consort. Fasting till noon, followed by feasting.

19—Vyañjulī Mahā-dvādaśī
Fasting from grains and beans for Parśvā Ekādaśī. Śrī Vāmana-dvādaśī, appearance anniversary of Lord Vāmana, Lord Kṛṣṇa's incarnation as a dwarf *brāhmaṇa.* (Fasting till noon today; feast tomorrow.) Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, one of the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana.

21—Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, father of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura (Śrīla Prabhupāda's spiritual master), and a pioneer in spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness in English. Fasting till noon, then feasting.

22—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura, foremost teacher of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa.

23—Anniversary of Śrīla Prabhupāda's accepting *sannyāsa,* the renounced order of life. Third month of Cāturmāsya begins (fasting from milk).

September 24–October 23

(*Month of Padmanābha*)

30—Anniversary of Śrīla Prabhupāda's arrival in the United States.

OCTOBER

4—Indirā Ekādaśī
Fasting from grains and beans.

17—Rāmacandra Vijayotsava, the anniversary of Lord Rāmacandra's victory over the demon Rāvaṇa. Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Madhvācārya, a Vaiṣṇava philosopher and spiritual master who appeared in the thirteenth century.

19—Pakṣavardhinī Mahā-dvādaśī
Fasting from grains and beans for Pāśāṅkuśā Ekādaśī. Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī, Śrīla Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, and Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī, great associates and followers of Lord Caitanya.

22—Śrī Kṛṣṇa Śāradīyā Rāsa-yātrā. Disappearance anniversary of Śrī Murāri Gupta, an associate of Lord Caitanya. Also, the fourth month of Cāturmāsya begins (fasting from *ūrad dāl*).

October 24–November 21

(*Month of Dāmodara*)

28—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Narottama Dāsa Ṭhākura, a great devotee of Kṛṣṇa known for his Bengali devotional songs.

31—Appearance of Radha Kunda.

NOVEMBER

2—Ramā Ekādaśī
Fasting from grains and beans.

6—Diwali, the festival of illuminating Kṛṣṇa's temples with lamps. Call your local Hare Kṛṣṇa temple for details.

7—Govardhana Pūjā, the festival commemorating the worship of Govardhana Hill by the residents of Vṛndāvana and Kṛṣṇa's lifting the hill. Call your local Hare Kṛṣṇa temple for details.

9—Disappearance anniversary of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, founder-*ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. Devotees observe this day with personal remembrances of Śrīla Prabhupāda, readings from his biography, and fasting till noon, followed by feasting.

14—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Śrīnivāsa Ācārya, a great follower of the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana.

BOOK SECTION: ŚRĪMAD-BHĀGAVATAM

Referred to as “the ripe fruit of the tree of Vedic literature,” *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the most complete and authoritative exposition of Vedic knowledge. Five thousand years ago the great sage Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa composed this *purāṇa,* or history, to explain the essence of spiritual knowledge. Here we present *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in serialized form, with the original Sanskrit text, transliteration, word meanings, translation, and purports by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, founder-*ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

DHRUVA MAHĀRĀJA’S REGRETS

Dhruva Mahārāja has heard from Lord Viṣṇu that He will fulfill all of Dhruva’s desires. Dhruva now laments that he had those desires when he endeavored to gain the Lord’s blessings.

CANTO 4: CHAPTER 9

मैत्रेय उवाच
29 मातुः सपत्न्या वाग्बाणैर्हृदि विद्धस्तु तान् स्मरन्
नैच्छन्मुक्तिपतेर्मुक्तिं तस्मात्तापमुपेयिवान्

maitreya uvāca
mātuḥ sapatnyā vāg-bāṇair
hṛdi viddhas tu tān smaran
naicchan mukti-pater muktiṁ
tasmāt tāpam upeyivān

maitreyaḥ uvāca—the great sage Maitreya replied; *mātuḥ*—of his mother; *sa-patnyāḥ*—of the co-wife; *vāk-bāṇaiḥ*—by the arrows of harsh words; *hṛdi*—in the heart; *viddhaḥ*—pierced; *tu*—then; *tān*—all of them; *smaran*—remembering; *na*—not; *aicchat*—desired; *mukti-pateḥ*—from the Lord, whose lotus feet give liberation; *muktim*—salvation; *tasmāt*—therefore; *tāpam*—grief; *upeyivān*—he suffered.

Maitreya answered: Dhruva Mahārāja’s heart, which was pierced by the arrows of the harsh words of his stepmother, was greatly aggrieved, and thus when he fixed upon his goal of life he did not forget her misbehavior. He did not demand actual liberation from this material world, but at the end of his devotional service, when the Supreme Personality of Godhead appeared before him, he was simply ashamed of the material demands he had in his mind.

PURPORT (continued from the previous issue): The great sage Maitreya explained that Dhruva Mahārāja did not desire in the beginning to engage in the service of the Lord, but he wanted an exalted position better than his great-grandfather’s. This is more or less not service to the Lord but service to the senses. Even if one gets the position of Brahmā, the most exalted position in this material world, he is a conditioned soul. Śrīla Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī says that if one is elevated to real, pure devotional service, he considers even great demigods like Brahmā and Indra to be on an equal level with an insignificant insect. ① The reason is that an insignificant insect has a desire for

(1) Why does one who is elevated to pure devotional service consider even great demigods to be on an equal level with an insignificant insect?

sense gratification and even a great personality like Lord Brahmā also wants to dominate this material nature.

Sense gratification means domination over material nature. ② The whole competition between conditioned souls is based upon domination of this material nature. Modern scientists are proud of their knowledge because they are discovering new methods to dominate the laws of material nature. They think that this is the advancement of human civilization—the more they can dominate the material laws, the more advanced they think they are. Dhruva Mahārāja's propensity in the beginning was like that. He wanted to dominate this material world in a greater position than Lord Brahmā. ③ Therefore elsewhere it is described that after the appearance of the Lord, when Dhruva Mahārāja thought and compared his determination to his final reward, he realized that he had wanted a few particles of broken glass but instead had received many diamonds. As soon as he saw the Supreme Personality of Godhead face to face, he immediately became conscious of the unimportance of his demand from the Lord to have an exalted position better than Lord Brahmā's.

When Dhruva Mahārāja became situated on the *vasudeva* platform due to seeing the Lord face to face, all his material contamination was cleared. Thus he became ashamed of what his demands were and what he had achieved. ④ He was very much ashamed to think that although he had gone to Madhuvana, giving up the kingdom of his father, and he had gotten a spiritual master like Nārada Muni, he was still thinking of revenge against his stepmother and wanted to occupy an exalted post within this material world. These were the causes for his moroseness even after he received all the desired benedictions from the Lord.

When Dhruva Mahārāja factually saw the Supreme Personality of Godhead, there was no question of a revengeful attitude towards his stepmother nor any aspiration to lord it over the material world, but the Supreme Personality is so kind that He knew that Dhruva Mahārāja wanted these. Speaking before Dhruva Mahārāja, He used the word *vedāham* because when Dhruva Mahārāja demanded material benefits, the Lord was present within his heart and so knew everything. The Lord always knows everything a man is thinking. This is confirmed in *Bhagavad-gītā* also: *vedāhaṁ samatītāni.*

The Lord fulfilled all Dhruva Mahārāja's desires. His revengeful attitude towards his stepmother and stepbrother was satisfied, his desire for a more exalted position than that of his great-grandfather was also fulfilled, and at the same time, his eternal position in Dhruvaloka was fixed. Although Dhruva Mahārāja's achievement of an eternal planet was not conceived of by him, Kṛṣṇa thought, "What will Dhruva do with an exalted position within this material world?" ⑤ Therefore He gave Dhruva the opportunity to rule this material world for thirty-six thousand years with unchangeable senses and the chance to perform many great sacrifices and thus become the most reputed king within this material world. And, after finishing with all this material enjoyment, Dhruva would be promoted to the spiritual world, which includes the Dhruvaloka.

(2) What is the basis of competition between conditioned souls?
(3) What realization did Dhruva Mahārāja have when he compared his determination to his final reward?
(4) Why did Dhruva Mahārāja feel ashamed?
(5) How long would Dhruva Mahārāja rule the material world?
(6) What are the names of the four Kumāras ("the four celebrated *brahmacārīs*")?

ध्रुव उवाच
30 समाधिना नैकभवेन यत्पदं
विदुः सनन्दादय ऊर्ध्वरेतसः
मासैरहं षड्भिरमुष्य पादयो-
श्छायामुपेत्यापगतः पृथङ्मतिः

dhruva uvāca
samādhinā naika-bhavena yat padaṁ
viduḥ sanandādaya ūrdhva-retasaḥ
māsair ahaṁ ṣaḍbhir amuṣya pādayoś
chāyām upetyāpagataḥ pṛthaṅ-matiḥ

dhruvaḥ uvāca—Dhruva Mahārāja said; *samādhinā*—by practicing yoga in trance; *na*—never; *eka-bhavena*—by one birth; *yat*—which; *padam*—position; *viduḥ*—understood; *sananda-ādayaḥ*—the four *brahmacārīs* headed by Sanandana; *ūrdhva-retasaḥ*—infallible celibates; *māsaiḥ*—within months; *aham*—I; *ṣaḍbhiḥ*—six; *amuṣya*—of Him; *pādayoḥ*—of the lotus feet; *chāyām*—shelter; *upetya*—achieving; *apagataḥ*—fell down; *pṛthak-matiḥ*—my mind fixed on things other than the Lord.

Dhruva Mahārāja thought to himself: To endeavor to be situated in the shade of the lotus feet of the Lord is not an ordinary task because even the great brahmacārīs headed by Sanandana, who practiced aṣṭāṅga-yoga in trance, attained the shelter of the Lord's lotus feet only after many, many births. Within six months I achieved the same result, yet due to my thinking differently from the Lord, I fell down from my position.

PURPORT: In this verse Dhruva Mahārāja himself explains the cause of his moroseness. First he laments that to see the Supreme Personality of Godhead directly is not easy. ⑥ Even great saintly persons like the four celebrated *brahmacārīs* headed by Sanandana—Sanandana, Sanaka, Sanātana, and Sanat-kumāra—practiced the yoga system for many, many births and remained in trance before getting the opportunity to see the Supreme Lord face to face. As far as Dhruva Mahārāja was concerned, he saw the Supreme Lord personally after only six months of practice in devotional service. He expected, therefore, that as soon as he met the Supreme Lord, the Lord would take him to His abode immediately, without waiting. Dhruva Mahārāja could understand very clearly that the Lord had offered him the rule of the world for thirty-six thousand years because in the beginning he was under the spell of the material energy and wanted to take revenge against his stepmother and rule over his father's kingdom. Dhruva Mahārāja greatly lamented his propensity for ruling the material world and his revengeful attitude towards other living entities.

31 अहो बत ममानात्म्यं मन्दभाग्यस्य पश्यत
भवच्छिदः पादमूलं गत्वायाचे यदन्तवत्

aho bata mamānātmyaṁ
manda-bhāgyasya paśyata
bhava-cchidaḥ pāda-mūlaṁ
gatvā yāce yad antavat

aho—oh; *bata*—alas; *mama*—my; *anātmyam*—bodily consciousness; *manda-bhāgyasya*—of the unfortunate; *paśyata*—just see; *bhava*—material existence; *chidaḥ*—of the Lord, who can cut off; *pāda-mūlam*—the lotus feet; *gatvā*—having approached; *yāce*—I prayed for; *yat*—that which; *anta-vat*—perishable.

Alas, just look at me! I am so unfortunate. I approached the lotus feet of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who can immediately cut the chain of the repetition of birth and death, but still, out of my foolishness, I prayed for things which are perishable.

PURPORT: The word *anātmyam* is very significant in this verse. *Ātmā* means "the soul," and *anātmya* means "without any conception of the soul." Śrīla Ṛṣabhadeva instructed his sons that unless a human being comes to the point of understanding the *ātmā,* or spiritual position, whatever he does is ignorance, and this brings only defeat in his life. Dhruva Mahārāja regrets his unfortunate position, for although he approached the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is always able to give His devotee the highest benediction of cessation of the repetition of birth and death, which is impossible for any demigod to offer, he foolishly wanted something perishable.

⑦ When Hiraṇyakaśipu asked immortality from Lord Brahmā, Lord Brahmā expressed his inability to offer such a benediction because he himself is not immortal; therefore immortality, or complete cessation of the chain of repeated birth and death, can be offered by the Supreme Lord, the Personality of Godhead Himself, not by others. *Hariṁ vinā na mṛtim taranti.* It is said that without the blessings of Hari, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, no one can stop the continuous chain of birth and death within this material world. Therefore the Supreme Lord is also called *bhava-cchit.*

The Vaiṣṇava philosophy in the process of Kṛṣṇa consciousness prohibits the devotee from all kinds of material aspirations. A Vaiṣṇava devotee should always be *anyābhilāṣitā-śūnya,* free from all material aspirations for the results of fruitive activities or empiric philosophical speculation. ⑧ Dhruva Mahārāja was actually initiated by Nārada Muni, the greatest Vaiṣṇava, in the chanting of *oṁ namo bhagavate vāsudevāya.* This mantra is a *viṣṇu-mantra,* for by practicing the chanting of this mantra one is elevated to the Viṣṇuloka. Dhruva Mahārāja regrets that although he was initiated in the *viṣṇu-mantra* by a Vaiṣṇava, he still aspired for material benefits. That was another cause for lamentation. Although he got the result of the *viṣṇu-mantra* by the causeless mercy of the Lord, he lamented how foolish he was to have strived for material benefits while practicing devotional service. ⑨ In other words, every one of us who is engaged in devotional service in Kṛṣṇa consciousness should be completely free from all material aspirations. Otherwise we will have to lament like Dhruva Mahārāja.

32 मतिर्विदूषिता देवैः पतद्भिरसहिष्णुभिः
यो नारदवचस्तथ्यं नाग्राहिषमसत्तमः

matir vidūṣitā devaiḥ
patadbhir asahiṣṇubhiḥ
yo nārada-vacas tathyaṁ
nāgrāhiṣam asattamaḥ

matiḥ—intelligence; *vidūṣitā*—contaminated; *devaiḥ*—by the demigods; *patadbhiḥ*—who will fall down; *asahiṣṇubhiḥ*—intolerant; *yaḥ*—I who; *nārada*—of the great sage Nārada; *vacaḥ*—of the instructions; *tathyam*—the truth; *na*—not; *agrāhiṣam*—could accept; *asat-tamaḥ*—the most wretched.

Since all the demigods who are situated in the higher planetary system will have to come down again, they are all envious of my being elevated to Vaikuṇṭhaloka by devotional service. These intolerant demigods have dissipated my intelligence, and only for this reason could I not accept the genuine benediction of the instructions of Sage Nārada.

(7) Why couldn't Lord Brahmā give Hiraṇyakaśipu immortality?
(8) What mantra did Nārada Muni initiate Dhruva Mahārāja into?
(9) What should those engaged in devotional service do to avoid having to lament like Dhruva Mahārāja?

PURPORT: ⑩ As shown by many instances in the Vedic literature, when a person undergoes severe austerities, the demigods become very much perturbed because they are always afraid of losing their posts as the predominating deities of the heavenly planets. It is known to them that their position in the higher planetary system is impermanent, as it is stated in the *Bhagavad-gītā,* Ninth Chapter (*kṣīṇe puṇye martya-lokaṁ viśanti*). It is said in the *Gītā* that after exhausting the results of their pious activities, all the demigods, who are inhabitants of the higher planetary system, have to come back again to this earth.

It is a fact that the demigods control the different activities of the limbs of our bodies. Factually we are not free even in moving our eyelids. Everything is controlled by them. ⑪ Dhruva Mahārāja's conclusion is that these demigods, being envious of his superior position in devotional service, conspired against him to pollute his intelligence, and thus although he was the disciple of a great Vaiṣṇava, Nārada Muni, he could not accept Nārada's valid instructions.

Now Dhruva Mahārāja regretted very much that he had neglected these instructions. Nārada Muni had asked him, "Why should you bother about insult or adoration from your stepmother?" He of course said to Dhruva Mahārāja that since Dhruva was only a child, what did he have to do with such insult or adoration? But Dhruva Mahārāja was determined to achieve the benediction of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and therefore Nārada advised him to go back home for the time being, and in mature time he could try to practice devotional service. Dhruva Mahārāja regretted that he had rejected the advice of Nārada Muni and was adamant in asking him for something perishable, namely revenge against his stepmother for her insult, and possession of the kingdom of his father.

Dhruva Mahārāja regretted very much that he could not take seriously the instruction of his spiritual master and that his consciousness was therefore contaminated. Still, the Lord is so merciful that due to Dhruva's execution of devotional service He offered Dhruva the ultimate Vaiṣṇava goal.

33 दैवीं मायामुपाश्रित्य प्रसुप्त इव भिन्नदृक्
तप्ये द्वितीयेऽप्यसति भ्रातृभ्रातृव्यहृद्रुजा

daivīṁ māyām upāśritya
prasupta iva bhinna-dṛk
tapye dvitīye 'py asati
bhrātṛ-bhrātṛvya-hṛd-rujā

daivīm—of the Personality of Godhead; *māyām*—the illusory energy; *upāśritya*—taking shelter of; *prasuptaḥ*—dreaming while asleep; *iva*—like; *bhinna-dṛk*—having separated vision; *tapye*—I lamented; *dvitīye*—in the illusory energy; *api*—although; *asati*—temporary; *bhrātṛ*—brother; *bhrātṛvya*—enemy; *hṛt*—within the heart; *rujā*—by lamentation.

Dhruva Mahārāja lamented: I was under the influence of the illusory energy; being ignorant of the actual facts, I was sleeping on her lap. Under a vision of duality, I saw my brother as my enemy, and falsely I lamented within my heart, thinking, "They are my enemies."

PURPORT: Real knowledge is revealed to a devotee only when he comes to the right conclusion about life by the grace of the Lord. ⑫ Our creation of friends and enemies within this material world is something like dreaming at night. In dreams we create so many things out of various impressions in the subconscious mind, but all such creations are simply temporary and unreal. In the same way, although apparently we are awake in material life, because we have no information of the soul and the Supersoul, we create many friends and enemies simply out of imagination. Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī says that within this material world or material consciousness, good and bad are the same. The distinction between good and bad is simply a mental concoction. The actual fact is that all living entities are sons of God, or by-products of His marginal energy. Because of our being contaminated by the modes of material nature, we distinguish one spiritual spark from another. That is also another kind of dreaming.

It is stated in the *Bhagavad-gītā* that those who are actually learned do not make any distinction between a learned scholar, a *brāhmaṇa,* an elephant, a dog, and a *caṇḍāla.* They do not see in terms of the external body; rather, they see the person as spirit soul. By higher understanding one can know that the material body is nothing but a combination of the five material elements. In that sense also the bodily construction of a human being and that of a demigod are one and the same. From the spiritual point of view we are all spiritual sparks, parts and parcels of the Supreme Spirit, God. Either materially or spiritually we are basically one, but we make friends and enemies as dictated by the illusory energy. Dhruva Mahārāja therefore said, *daivīṁ māyām upāśritya:* the cause of his bewilderment was his association with the illusory, material energy.

[*Continued in the next issue.*]

(10) Why are the demigods sometimes perturbed when a person undergoes severe austerities?
(11) What did Dhruva Mahārāja think the demigods had done to him?
(12) How is our creation of friends and enemies within this material world something like dreaming at night?

Why We Stay in the Material World

The following conversation between His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda and some of his disciples took place in July 1975 on an early-morning walk in Los Angeles.

Disciple: Śrīla Prabhupāda, what is the qualification for going to the spiritual world?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: The first qualification is to always remember that this material world is a place of misery (*duḥkhālayam*). Then you can go to the spiritual world. As long as you think, "Oh, this material world is very nice," you have to remain here.

Disciple: Yesterday in your lecture you gave the example of Queen Kuntī, who prayed that calamities would happen to her again and again so that she would realize what a terrible place this material world is and remember Kṛṣṇa.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes, this is intelligence. When one concludes, "This material world is worthless," that is real knowledge. As long as one thinks, "No, it is not always bad; sometimes it is very good," that is ignorance.

Disciple: I often meet people who say that without the bad, the good wouldn't be as good.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: That is the logic of the criminal who is dunked into water as a punishment. The authorities catch him and put him down into the water, and when he is nearly suffocated they raise him a little and he says, "Ohhh, this is so nice!" But then he is immediately pushed down into the water again. So the good and bad of this material world are like that. People are put into the water and suffocated, and when they are taken out a little they say, "Ahhhh, this world is very nice." The rascals do not know that the next moment they are going to nearly drown. So unless we remember how suffocating the material world is, we are not fit for going back to Godhead. We must completely detest this world. If we keep just a little attachment for it—"Oh, sometimes it is very good here"—we have to remain.

Disciple: Is it true that Kṛṣṇa will take everything away from a devotee who still has some material attachment?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: That is Kṛṣṇa's special favor. That is not an ordinary favor. When Kṛṣṇa sees that His devotee is maintaining some material attachment, He says, "This fool wants Me, but at the same time he wants to stay in the material world. So let Me take away all his material possessions so that he will want only Me." This was done to me; I have practical experience. I did not want to take *sannyāsa* [the renounced order of life]; I thought I would do business. But Kṛṣṇa forced me to take *sannyāsa,* and my business was dismantled.

Disciple: Śrīla Prabhupāda, does Kṛṣṇa engage the material nature to beat us and kick us so that we will surrender to Him?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. Material nature's only business is beating us and kicking us. But we are so foolish that we think, "This kicking is very nice." That is our disease—we accept the kicking as very nice. We are always suffering three kinds of disturbances: *adhyātmika, adhibhautika,* and *adhidaivika.* These are disturbances caused by our own body and mind, disturbances caused by other living entities, and disturbances caused by the demigods, like severe weather or famine. We are always suffering from some disturbance, yet still we are thinking this material world is very nice, and we are trying to improve it. That is foolishness. The disturbances will always continue, so what is the meaning of improvement?

For example, now the scientists are trying to make some improvement in agricultural production. But how long will this improvement last? If there is no rainfall, how will all their "improvements" help? The rainfall is not in their hands; that is *adhidaivika:* it depends on the demigods. If the demigods want, they can completely stop the rain. So what is all this nonsensical "improvement"?

Kṛṣṇa says this material world is a place that is meant for misery. So how will you improve it? "Yes," the scientists say, "we are advancing. In the future people will live eternally; nobody will die." This is folly, illusion. People who are trying to do something that is impossible are fools, *mūḍhas.* Their mentality is like that of the ass. The master sits on the back of the ass and hangs a bunch of grass in front of him. The ass thinks, "I'll get it," and walks on and on. "If I just walk a little forward," he thinks, "I shall get the grass." He has no brain to see that he'll never get the grass, that as he is moving the grass is also moving.

So, the scientists are just like the ass. They do not see how foolish their "improvements" are. For example, now we have manufactured so many airplanes. It was thought, "Within two hours we shall be able to go many hundreds of miles. This is very nice." But there are so many dangers in an airplane. Now there is the problem of how to protect us from accidents. So what is the improvement? The improvement is that now two hundred men at a time can die all together. This is the improvement. What a horrible civilization!

Disciple: But someone may say, "You say this is a horrible civilization. So why don't you withdraw from it? Why don't you live by yourselves on a farm somewhere instead of in the cities, using the same cars and airplanes that we use?"

Śrīla Prabhupāda: People are suffering for want of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, so we are trying to make them Kṛṣṇa conscious. That is our only interest in the material world. Otherwise, we have no interest in staying here. We are not social workers or political workers: we are Kṛṣṇa's workers. We advise people: "Become Kṛṣṇa conscious and all your problems will be solved." That is our duty—to advise them, to convince them, to give them all facilities to become Kṛṣṇa conscious. But if they still do not take the medicine, what can be done? They will go on suffering. These rascals who have the idea that by "improvements" they will be happy in this material world—they will never understand Kṛṣṇa consciousness. ❀

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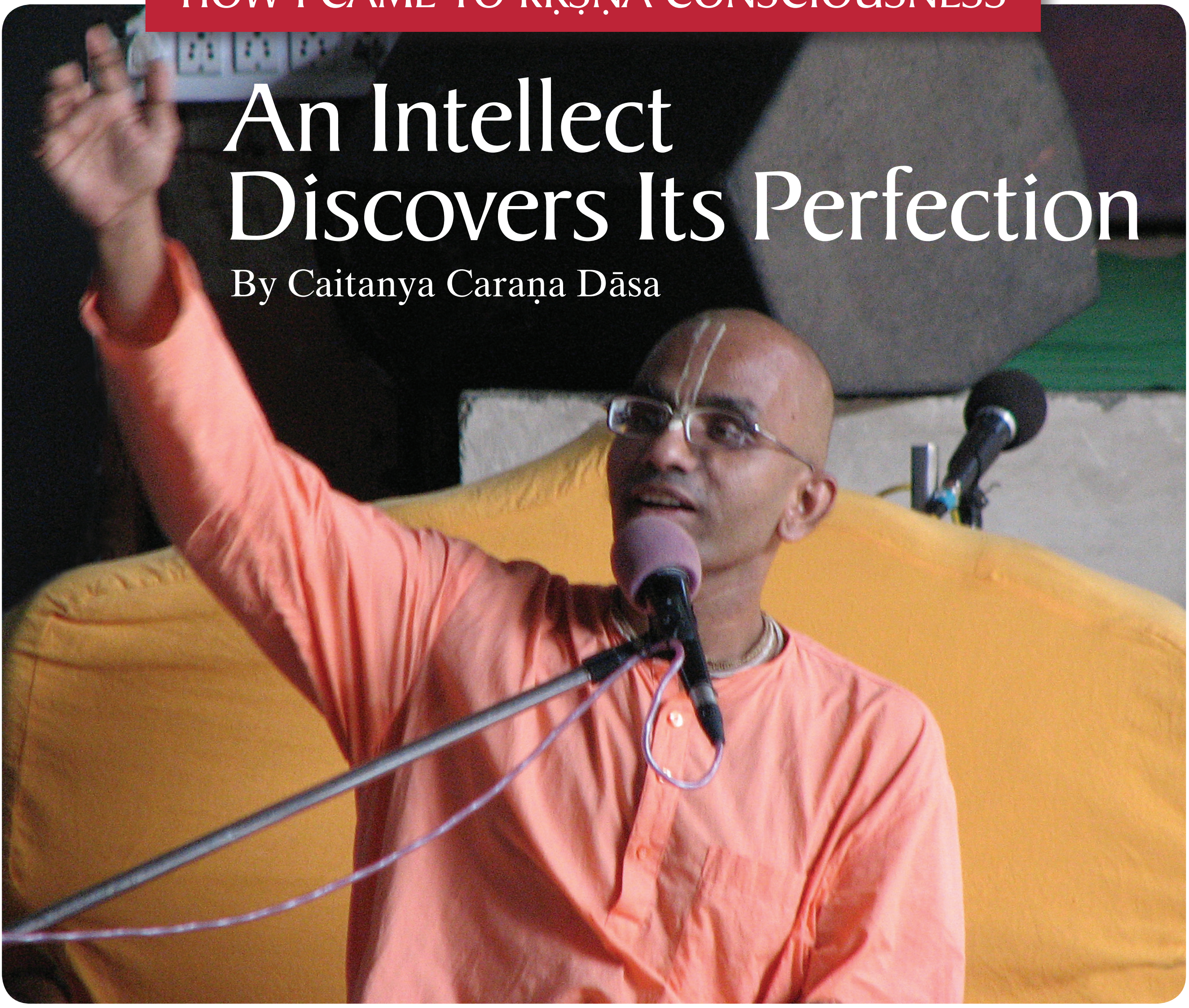
HOW I CAME TO KṚṢṆA CONSCIOUSNESS

An Intellect Discovers Its Perfection

By Caitanya Caraṇa Dāsa



Divya Nitāi Dāsa

A search for intellectual satisfaction takes a young man from academics to devotion.

I WAS BORN with a congenital heart deformity that doctors said would probably not allow me to see my fifth birthday. My parents gave me the name Chandrahas, "one whose laugh is like the moon," but sadly they found few reasons to smile in my childhood. When I was around one, learning to walk in our middle-class house, I suddenly collapsed to the floor, never to walk naturally again. My parents, Ramachandra and Sunanda Pujari, had already had me vaccinated against the dreaded polio infection rampant in India in the 1970s, but the doctor had unknowingly given me a defective vaccine.

With my left leg diseased, I had to walk with either a limp or a brace. When I was around two, I was enjoying the spectacle of the popular Diwali firecrackers with the neighborhood children when a rocket-firecracker went off course and headed toward me. I couldn't run away like the other children, and the rocket hit my right arm, fusing my shirt with my skin and, racing upwards, burning my face, missing my right eye by millimeters. The rocket then fell to the ground, leaving lifelong scars on my right arm and the right side of my face.

When I was three, I fell from a wall near my house and cracked my skull. An astrologer told my despairing parents that I was plagued by Saturn, which would cause repeated trouble for the first seven and a half years of my life.

Shelter in the Intellect

My parents did everything in their power to help me have a normal childhood. They decided not to have another child for a decade so that they could give their full attention to caring for me. They admitted me into an expensive Christian convent school so that I could have the best education. My good grades mitigated their sorrows somewhat. They would tell visiting relatives that God had compensated for my physical inabilities by giving me intellectual abilities. I would wonder about this mysterious being, God, who had the enormous power over my life to decide what to give and what to take.

For my parents, who were *brāhmaṇas* by caste, religious rituals were an important part of the family culture. My father told me the significance of our surname, Pujari, which means a priest who performs the worship (*pūjā*) of the deity. About a century ago, his grandfather, while bathing in a river one early morning in our native village, had found floating a five-headed Hanumān deity, which he had subsequently installed and served as *pūjārī.*

I would wonder about this mysterious being, God, who had the enormous power over my life to decide what to give and what to take.

My daily life with its pursuit of academic excellence had little in common with my religious ancestry. At school, as my grades kept getting better, it seemed Saturn had left me. One year I was among the top scorers on the statewide exams. The district collector (the top government officer of the district) visited our house to congratulate my parents, and the local newspaper carried an article and a photo of the visit. For my parents, life seemed to have turned a full circle. They had shed so many sad tears over their son. Now at last they had occasion to shed tears of pride and joy.

Unfortunately, the joy was short-lived. The very day our family photo appeared in the newspaper, my mother, while getting a medical checkup, was diagnosed with advanced leukemia. She fought gallantly against the cancer with chemotherapy, but within one painfully long month, it was all over.

As the world around me collapsed, I sought shelter in my studies and academic performance.

From Summit into Quicksand and Out

While studying for an engineering degree at a leading college in Pune, in 1996, I took the GRE exam for pursuing post-graduate studies in the USA. I came in first in the state, securing the highest score in the history of my college. As I exulted in my greatest achievement, I experienced something perturbing. Till then, society had led me to believe that for a student, academic accomplishment was the ultimate standard of success and happiness. I had feverishly sought that standard and had finally achieved it. Yet as I stood on the summit of success, I found that the grades brought no joy. Only when others congratulated me did I feel satisfaction. I felt dependent for my happiness on others' appreciation—more dependent than ever before. As I pondered this disturbing experience, it struck me that I had been chasing a mirage: academic achievement—or any other achievement for that matter—would never satisfy me, but would only increase my hunger for appreciation and thus perpetuate my dissatisfaction. The summit had turned into quicksand.

A friend extended a helping hand to rescue me from the quicksand—by giving me Śrīla Prabhupāda's *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is.* The *Gītā* answered many of my questions about life and its purpose that had been left unanswered by the numerous books I'd read, spiritual and secular. Rādheśyāma Dāsa, the temple president of ISKCON Pune, and Gaurasundara Dāsa, a dynamic youth mentor there, answered whatever questions remained. Understanding the profound philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness illuminated my life's journey with hope and joy. I understood that my lame leg, which had always interfered with my playing cricket, was a result of my own past bad karma. But it couldn't interfere with my spiritual life, because I am not my body and my spiritual advancement is independent of my body.

The Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* was my next discovery. Since my teens I had been fighting a losing battle against the passions of youth, which would often sabotage my intellectual pursuits. In the chanting of the holy names, I discovered the technology to sabotage those passions.

The Highest Education

But the best was yet to come. As I studied the books of Śrīla Prabhupāda and his followers, especially their writings based on the *Bhagavad-gītā,* I found myself relishing the study itself. This was in marked contrast to my earlier academic career, where my joy came primarily from the grades. Then I read in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* about the super-intellectual sage Vyāsadeva. His phenomenal literary achievement in writing scores of Vedic books failed to fully satisfy him until he wrote exclusive glorification of the Lord. As I read the story, I felt my life story was being replayed in front of me, with the future included. I recognized the principle that intelligence can bring real happiness and good to oneself and others only when used to glorify Kṛṣṇa. By understanding that principle, my future became clear.

I started using my intelligence to share the philosophy and practices of Kṛṣṇa consciousness with my college friends. To my amazement, several of them became remarkably transformed, shedding off bad habits and leading balanced, healthy, happy lives. After my graduation in 1998, I found myself at a crossroad that I had already crossed internally. Though I had both a lucrative job as a software engineer in a multinational company and an opportunity for education in a prestigious American university, an overpowering inner conviction told me that I could serve society best by sharing the spiritual wisdom that had enriched my life. There was no shortage of software engineers in India or of Indian students in America, but there was an acute shortage of educated spiritualists everywhere.

But another crossroad still remained. Far more difficult than sacrificing a promising career was enduring the disappointment in the eyes of my father. In traditional Indian culture, aging parents are often taken care of by their grown-up children, but I knew that the loss of such care was not my father's concern. By his expertise at managing his finances, he had attained reasonable financial security, and he also had my brilliant eleven-year-old younger brother, Harshal, to count on. His heartbreak was to see his older son, for whose materially illustrious future he had dreamt and toiled, become the antithesis of his dreams: a shaven-headed, robe-wearing monk with no bank account. His distress agonized me, but my heart's calling left me with no alternative. I prayed fervently to Kṛṣṇa to heal my father's heart and to somehow, sometime, help him understand my decision.

So in 1999 I decided to make sharing *Gītā* wisdom my fulltime engagement by joining ISKCON Pune as a *brahmacārī*, a single and celibate member of the ashram. In 2000 I received initiation from my spiritual master, His Holiness Rādhānātha Mahārāja, who told me that because I had given up the chance for higher education in the USA for Kṛṣṇa's sake, Kṛṣṇa was giving me the chance to receive and share the highest education: Kṛṣṇa consciousness, celebrated in the *Bhagavad-gītā* as *rāja-vidyā,* the king of all education. In accordance with his instruction, I started giving talks to young people first in Pune and then all over India. Somehow, by Kṛṣṇa's mercy, my lame leg has not been a hindrance.

Intellectual Samādhi

In 2002 I discovered writing. Since childhood I had wanted to write but had not been able to: I was never short of words (my favorite hobby was memorizing words from dictionaries), but I always seemed short of ideas. The rich philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness more than made up for that. Over the last seven years, some 150 articles and 6 books have emerged from my computer. Many of these articles have appeared in leading Indian newspapers and some in *Back to Godhead.* When my first article appeared in the reputed *Times of India* newspaper, my overjoyed father sent a hundred photocopies of that article to his relatives, colleagues, and acquaintances. When I see the joy in my father's eyes on seeing every new book I write, I thank Kṛṣṇa for answering my prayers.

At the end of 2009, Nāgarāja Dāsa, the editor of BTG, invited me to serve as an associate editor. The service of reviewing articles with the other editors, who are all learned and seasoned devotee-scholars, has broadened the horizons of my spiritual understanding more than anything else I have done before. In editing the writings of veteran devotees, including my beloved spiritual master, I have found a way to integrate my intellectual passion with the devotional principle of selfless service, thus experiencing a higher spiritual joy.

The process of writing has brought me meaning, purpose, passion, and fulfillment. Although I am still a neophyte in my spiritual life and struggle against selfish desires, writing gives me glimpses of *samādhi,* blissful absorption in thoughts of Kṛṣṇa and His message.

Having experienced both the emptiness of material intellectual pursuits and the richness of spiritual intellectual engagements, I feel saddened that most modern intellectuals are deprived of this supreme fruit of their intellects. Especially many Indian intellectuals, despite earning laurels at a global level, are still missing the intellectual feast that their scripturally learned ancestors relished for millennia. My writings are humble attempts to help them rediscover their lost legacy. I look forward to using the remainder of my life to relish and share the intellectual-devotional nectar with which I have been blessed.

TEMPLE WEBSITES

Many ISKCON centers have their own websites. To limit the number of pages taken up by the list of ISKCON centers that we run in each issue (pp. 59–61), we don't include websites as part of the listings. If you'd like to find out if a temple has a website, log on to Krishna.com and click on "Community"›"Krishna Consciousness Society"›"Temples and Centers" at the top of the page.

Praying for the WELFARE OF OTHERS

On the path of pure devotion to Kṛṣṇa, where does praying for others fit in?

By Ūrmilā Devī Dāsī

THANK YOU!” I said when a friend brought me a plate of lunch. “Can I do anything for you?”

“Please pray for me,” she replied. “Ask that I can do better service for Kṛṣṇa.”

Later that day I saw a posted notice about a devotee’s illness that included a request for prayer. I often pray for others, and have also done my share of asking others to pray for me.

A few days before Śrīdhara Swami, an ISKCON leader and guru, left this world several years ago, I asked him if I could do anything for him. He requested me to research and write about praying for others, often called intercessory prayer.

“So many people say, ‘Would you pray for me?’ or ‘I’ll pray for you,’ but I wonder if that is just something people say, or if they really do it,” he said. “We should research how praying for others is part of spiritual life, what we pray for, and the mood we should have.”

For a deeper understanding of intercessory prayer, I turned to India’s ancient scriptures, especially the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.*

Praying for Others

After the great war at Kurukshetra, one of the few warriors left alive on the defeated side was Aśvatthāmā, son of Droṇācārya, the martial guru of the Pāṇḍavas. Aśvatthāmā wanted to ensure that the dynasty of the victors at Kurukshetra, the Pāṇḍavas, would end with them. He therefore killed the Pāṇḍavas’ five sons, but a grandson was lying in embryo within the young widow Uttarā, wife of Arjuna’s son Abhimanyu.

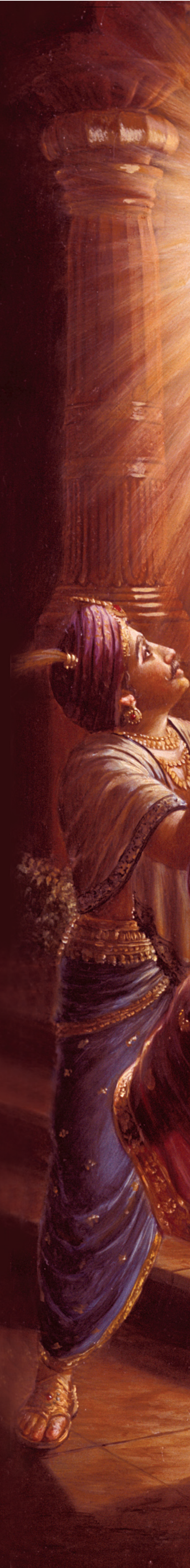
Aśvatthāmā was a *brāhmaṇa* by birth though not by character. Still, he knew how to use supernatural weapons and could cause an abortion from a distance with a *brahmāstra* that could home in on a specific target. Aśvatthāmā threw the weapon at Uttarā’s womb, and she felt her child to be in danger. She raced to Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa.

“Let the weapon destroy me if you like,” she prayed to Lord Kṛṣṇa, “but please save my baby!”

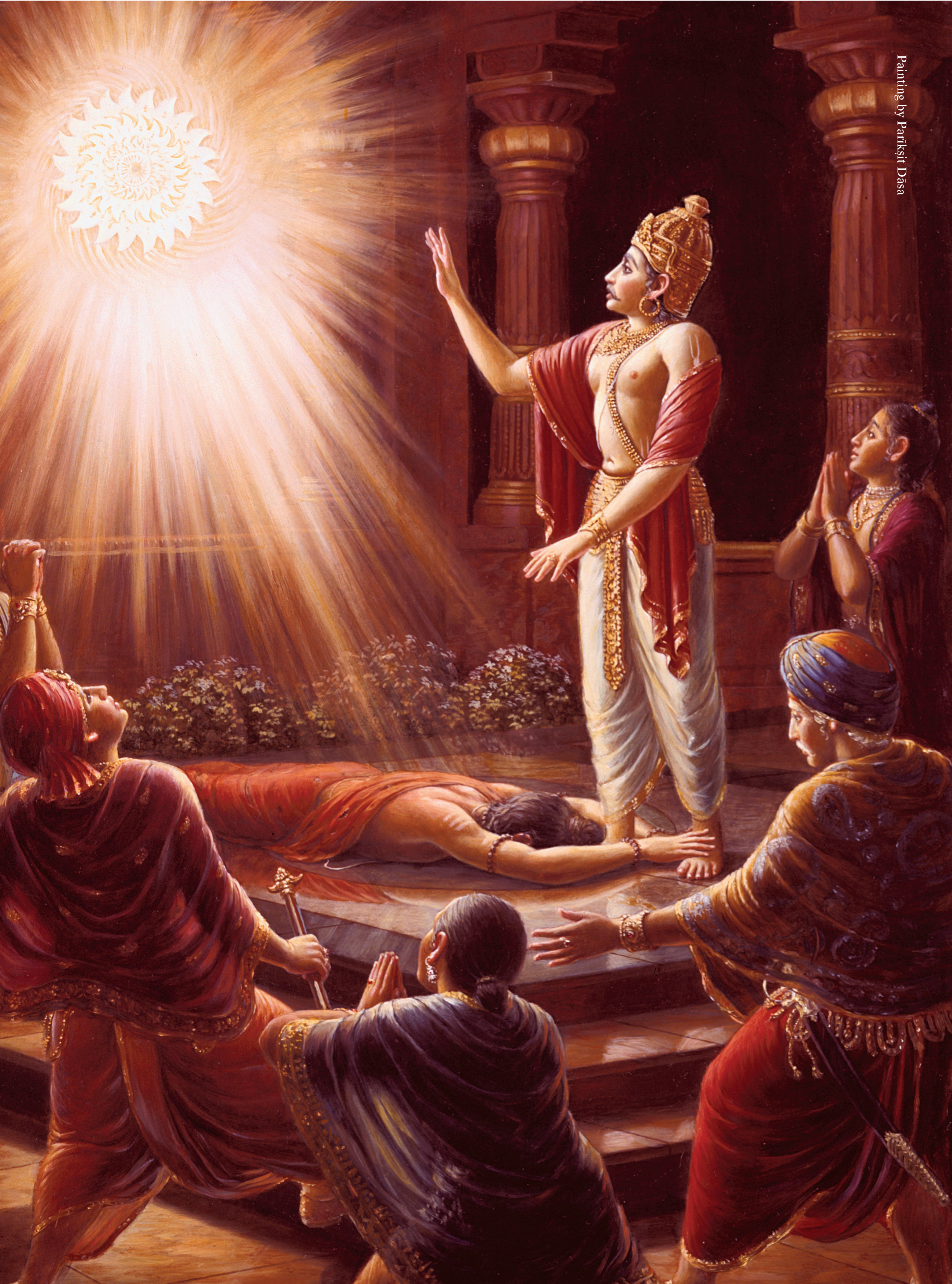
Kṛṣṇa then entered her womb in a four-armed form, foiling Aśvatthāmā. The Pāṇḍava line would continue.

In this historical account from the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam,* a devotee of Kṛṣṇa prays for another’s welfare. There are other notable examples in scripture of prayer for others. Prahlāda asked the Lord to give mercy to his father, who had tried to kill him numerous times. King Ambarīṣa also prayed that his would-be murderer, Durvāsā, be excused.

Some notable devotees have prayed for forgiveness for a family member who committed an offense to others. When the serpent Kāliya attacked Kṛṣṇa, his wives prayed for his release. When the sage Śamīka’s son cursed King



Pursued by Lord Kṛṣṇa’s disc, Durvāsā Muni takes shelter of Ambarīṣa Mahārāja, who prays to the Lord to forgive Durvāsā for his offense.



Painting by Parīkṣit Dāsa

Parīkṣit to die, the sage begged Kṛṣṇa for his son's pardon.

There are also historical examples of devotees praying for others' spiritual enlightenment. Vāsudeva Datta, an associate of Caitanya Mahāprabhu, asked to take on others' sinful karmic reactions so they could attain *bhakti,* love of God. Prahlāda and Lord Brahmā both implored the Lord to grant spiritual benedictions to people in general.

Although there are few instances in scripture of praying for others' protection from disease, injury, and general harm, we do find that Yaśodā Devī, Kṛṣṇa's mother, often prayed for her son's protection, and the context seems to indicate that such prayers for others' bodily safety were a common part of the cultural tradition that surrounds ancient India's spirituality.

When we examine Prabhupāda's prayers for others, we find that he does include health or prosperity, but always within the context of spiritual service.

The Role of Mood

Prayer to God could be considered an inherently pure activity, but intent or mood affect the purity of prayer. So, while prayer to God is one of the items of pure devotional service, those who offer prayers for others should consider their own motives. We do not want to try to use God as our servant.

Often, prayer for others takes the form of asking God to relieve someone of suffering. Due to the law of karma, people suffer as a reaction to their own sinful deeds. Ultimately it is Kṛṣṇa, or His deputed agents, who have ordained suffering for the person's rectification. So, when we pray for others, are we presuming to know better than God how to run the universe, or one life within it? No. We are simply trying to develop our natural relationship of dependence on Him. Even the most exalted saintly devotees naturally turn to Kṛṣṇa when they or others are in danger. Such dependence is the natural loving relationship of the pure soul to Kṛṣṇa.

Praying for others focuses our attention on Kṛṣṇa rather than on thinking ourselves the controllers of the world. If we don't turn to Kṛṣṇa, we might develop a mood of carelessness and irresponsibility in our dealings with others, even becoming cold-hearted in response to others' difficulties. Taking our time and energy to pray for others helps us develop selflessness.

Those who pray for others in a mood of pure love for Kṛṣṇa know that everything is up to Him. It is not the volume or intensity of prayer that changes a situation; it is Kṛṣṇa and His will. It is true that there are cases in scripture where the Lord changes things at the behest of His devotees. But while Kṛṣṇa may sometimes change His decisions out of love for those who petition Him, He always has the ultimate deciding power. Those who pray for others, therefore, think, "Whatever you want, Lord, is all good."

Throughout the scriptures, those who want spiritual enlightenment are advised to do good for others. Activities to benefit others are both a prime symptom of spiritual advancement and an essential part of the process to achieve enlightenment. Offering intercessory prayer can enhance such a mood of openhearted service.

What Can We Pray For?

We have considered the mood of offering prayers for others, but what of the content? Is it within the realm of pure devotional service to Kṛṣṇa to pray for others' health, family, and finances? When we examine Prabhupāda's prayers for others, we find that he does include health or prosperity, but always within the context of spiritual service. [See the sidebar "Examples of Intercessory Prayer."] Like Prabhupāda, we can certainly ask Kṛṣṇa to grant others a fit body for a long life in His service. Of course, since the definition of "service" to Kṛṣṇa is what Kṛṣṇa desires, those who pray like this accept that the best service a person could render might be in a situation different from what we imagine is best.

Asking Others to Pray for Us

So far we have considered prayers for others in circumstances where the person praying took the initiative without the request or expressed desire from the person for whom the prayers were offered. There are also, however, numerous examples of devotees who request others to beseech the Lord on their behalf. King Pratāparudra asked many devotees to beg Lord Caitanya to grant him a meeting. Śrīla Prabhupāda would sometimes ask his disciples to pray for his recovery from disease so he could finish his spiritual master's mission.

Asking others to pray for us is not contrary to the mood of pure love for Kṛṣṇa we're trying to cultivate. We are not trying to manipulate Kṛṣṇa, but are asking others to pray for us because of a natural humility—a feeling that others' prayers will be more valuable than our own. We do well to remember that when we ask spiritually mature persons to offer prayers on our behalf, they will think of our ultimate benefit, not just whatever we may be asking for. They might, therefore, ask the Lord for us to graciously accept His will, whatever it may be.

Both those who pray for others, whether asked or not, and those who request others to pray for them can remember that the results of prayer are not always visible or obvious. Kṛṣṇa is happy to fulfill the

Examples of Intercessory Prayer

Requesting others to pray for oneself

Śrīla Prabhupāda: I came here [to America] with a great mission to execute my spiritual master's order, but my heart is stabbing me. . . . If I die in this condition, my mission will remain unfulfilled. Please therefore pray to Prabhu Lord Caitanya and Vrindaban Bihar [Kṛṣṇa] to rescue me this time. My mission is still not finished. (Letter to Sri Krishna Pandit, 1967)

Drawing of Śrīla Prabhupāda by Aleksandra Urbanska

Requesting the Lord to forgive an offender

Prahlāda Mahārāja said, "O Supreme Lord, . . . [my father] directly blasphemed Your Lordship, the spiritual master of all living beings, and committed heavily sinful activities directed against me, Your devotee. I wish that he be excused for these sinful activities." (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.10.15–17)

King Ambarīṣa said, "I wish . . . that this *brāhmaṇa* [Durvāsā] be freed from the burning caused by the Sudarśana *cakra.*" (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 9.5.10)

"Then the *ṛṣi* [Śamīka] prayed to the all-pervading Personality of Godhead to pardon his immature boy, who had no intelligence and who committed the great sin of cursing a person who was completely free from all sins, who was subordinate, and who deserved to be protected." (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.18.47)

"At least once, a master should tolerate an offense committed by his child or subject. O supreme peaceful Soul, You should therefore forgive our foolish husband [Kāliya], who did not understand who You are." (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.16.51)

Requesting the bodily protection of another

Uttarā said, "A fiery iron arrow is coming towards me fast. My Lord, let it burn me personally, if You so desire, but please do not let it burn and abort my embryo. Please do me this favor, my Lord." (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.8.10)

[The women of Vṛndāvana prayed for Kṛṣṇa's protection:] "May Aja protect Your legs, may Maṇimān protect Your knees, Yajña Your thighs, Acyuta the upper part of Your waist, and Hayagrīva Your abdomen. May Keśava protect Your heart, Īśa Your chest, the sun-god Your neck, Viṣṇu Your arms, Urukrama Your face, and Īśvara Your head." (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.6.22)

Requesting the welfare of the world

Prahlāda Mahārāja said, "May there be good fortune throughout the universe, and may all envious persons be pacified. May all living entities become calm by practicing *bhakti-yoga,* for by accepting devotional service they will think of each other's welfare." (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 5.18.9)

Vāsudeva Datta to Caitanya Mahāprabhu: "My dear Lord, You incarnate just to deliver all conditioned souls. I now have one petition, which I wish You would accept. My Lord, my heart breaks to see the sufferings of all the conditioned souls; therefore I request You to transfer the karma of their sinful lives upon my head. My dear Lord, let me suffer perpetually in a hellish condition, accepting all the sinful reactions of all living entities. Please finish their diseased material life." (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya* 15.160, 162, 163)

Various prayers in Prabhupāda's letters

"I pray to Kṛṣṇa for your more and more advancement of Kṛṣṇa consciousness."

"I am thinking of you and your husband and of the nice devotional service you are performing, and I pray that Kṛṣṇa will give you more and more intelligence to continue in this way."

"I will pray for your ever increasing advancement in Kṛṣṇa consciousness."

"I am praying to Kṛṣṇa to offer you all His strength in the discharge of His noble service."

"I pray that you will live long for chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa continuously."

"I am praying always to Kṛṣṇa that the boys and girls who have stretched their helping hand in this country in this connection may always be in good health and continue to assist me in my missionary activities."

"I am praying for your long life and prosperity in Kṛṣṇa consciousness."

"I pray that Kṛṣṇa may bless you with a long life with which to open many temples and that in this very lifetime you may return back to home, back to Godhead."

"I am fully aware of your sincere service and therefore I pray always to Kṛṣṇa for your all-round welfare."

"I pray to Kṛṣṇa that you may give a starting to such an ashrama in full Kṛṣṇa consciousness."

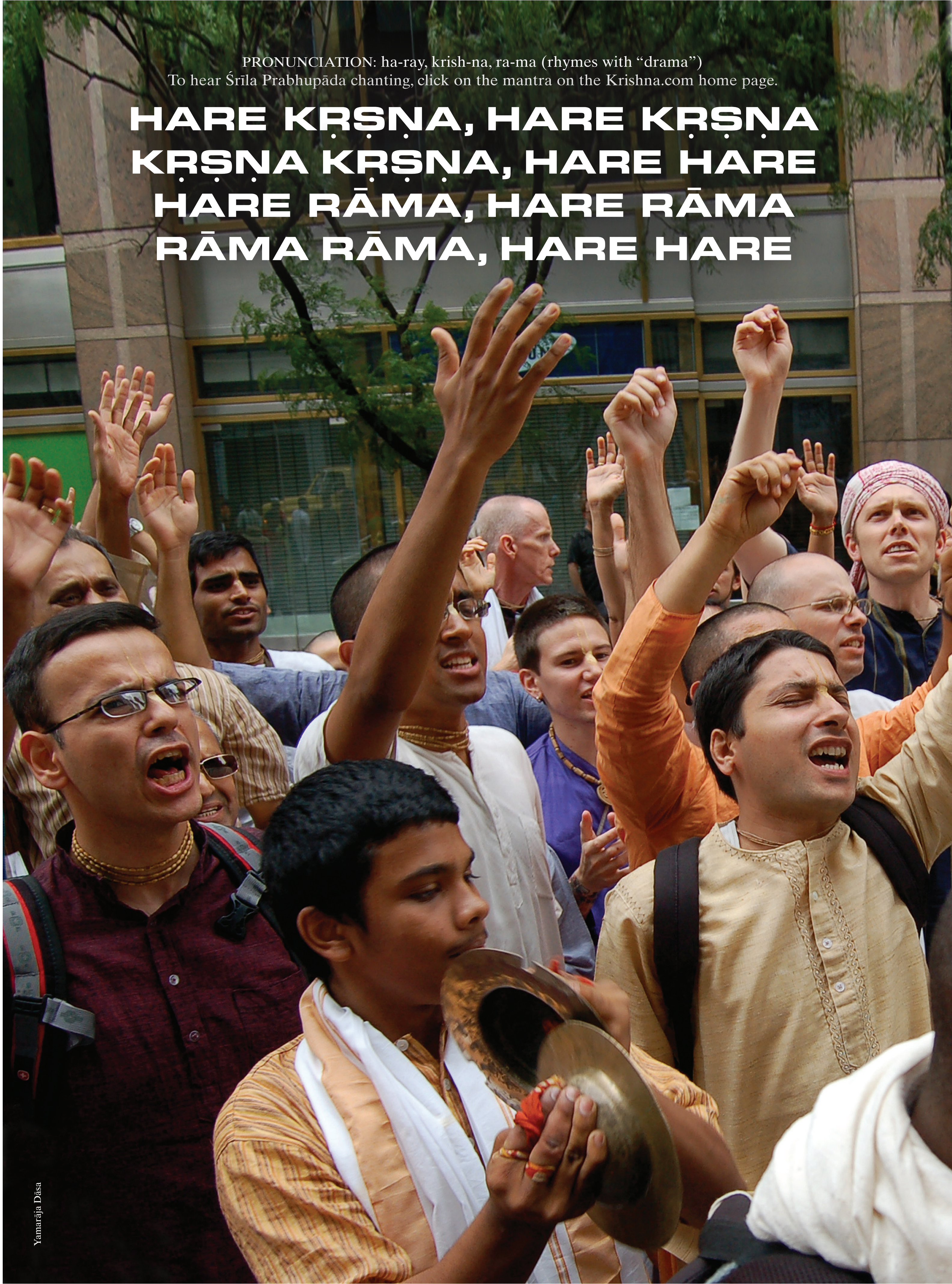
"I am praying to Kṛṣṇa that He will favor you with that new house for conducting His preaching work."

"I pray to Kṛṣṇa that you all may use your intelligence for Kṛṣṇa's service and not for any personal ambition."

Praying for Prabhupāda's Health

[When Prabhupāda was ill in 1977, the members of the Governing Body Commission asked him if it was appropriate for his disciples to pray to Kṛṣṇa to cure him so that he could stay with us, rather than return to Vaikuṇṭha, the spiritual world, at that time. This was his reply.]

"When I go to Los Angeles I am in Vaikuṇṭha. When I go to New York I am in Vaikuṇṭha. Wherever we have got a temple, that is Vaikuṇṭha. So why shall I have objection? So do your duty nicely and see what Kṛṣṇa desires. Let it be fulfilled. But you do your duty. It is your duty to pray to Kṛṣṇa as affectionate children, and let Kṛṣṇa decide. And I have no objection, either." (May 28, 1977, Vrindavan)



PRONUNCIATION: ha-ray, krish-na, ra-ma (rhymes with “drama”)
To hear Śrīla Prabhupāda chanting, click on the mantra on the Krishna.com home page.

HARE KṚṢṆA, HARE KṚṢṆA
KṚṢṆA KṚṢṆA, HARE HARE
HARE RĀMA, HARE RĀMA
RĀMA RĀMA, HARE HARE

Yamarāja Dāsa

honest prayers of His devotees, but sometimes He gives a better result than what is asked for. In our limited conception of reality, we may not always be able to see the greater good in the situation that Kṛṣṇa arranges. God is all-good and all-merciful, the most powerful controller and our best friend. So, all that happens, whether bad or good from our limited material vision, is for our benefit.

Prabhupāda explains how a devotee views happiness and distress:

> A fully Kṛṣṇa conscious person is not at all disturbed by the onslaughts of the threefold miseries, for he accepts all miseries as the mercy of the Lord, thinking himself only worthy of more trouble due to his past misdeeds; and he sees that his miseries, by the grace of the Lord, are minimized to the lowest. Similarly, when he is happy he gives credit to the Lord, thinking himself unworthy of the happiness; he realizes that it is due only to the Lord's grace that he is in such a comfortable condition and able to render better service to the Lord.
>
> (*Bhagavad-gītā* 2.56, Purport)

In summary, for intercessory prayer to be part of pure devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa, it should be free of desires outside of that service, and it should ask for something favorable to the Lord. Such prayers should not stem from excessive attachment to the world. We can engage in intercessory prayer to deepen our relationship with Kṛṣṇa, to develop a mood of humility and compassion for others, and with a desire to glorify our beloved Lord.

Ūrmilā Devī Dāsī, a BTG associate editor, has a Ph.D. in educational leadership from the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. She is working on international curriculum projects for primary and secondary education in ISKCON.

OFFERINGS WITH LOVE

(*continued from page 13*)

of offerings made to the Lord is not exactly what is offered, but how it is offered.

In this regard, Śrīla Prabhupāda has taught that Kṛṣṇa accepts the intent and devotion of the offering more than the offered item itself. A story in the *Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa* (recounted in *The Nectar of Devotion,* Chapter 10) illustrates this concept by showing how a poor *brāhmaṇa* achieved spiritual perfection by constantly remembering the Lord and worshiping Him by concentrated meditation. The *brāhmaṇa's* devotion was so pure that he burnt his finger while meditating on preparing sweet rice for the Lord and testing its temperature.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura has taught that we should not try to see Kṛṣṇa directly but should serve Him in such a way that He will be pleased to see us. The mental offerings of the poor *brāhmaṇa* were so sincere that the Lord accepted them and watched His devotee with great pleasure. When the *brāhmaṇa* burnt his finger, the Lord sent a celestial airplane to bring him to the spiritual world. Because of his unalloyed devotion, he became one of the Lord's eternal associates.

Offering Everything to Kṛṣṇa

All of these examples show how Kṛṣṇa accepts the sincere offerings of His devotees without regard for external distinctions such as age and social class, yet He rejected Duryodhana's opulent reception because it was devoid of love and faith. In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.27.16–18) Kṛṣṇa tells Uddhava, "One should worship Me in My deity forms by offering the most excellent paraphernalia" but "even very opulent presentations do not satisfy Me if they are offered by nondevotees" or without love.

Kṛṣṇa is looking for our effort, which extends beyond food offerings and into every aspect of our lives. In fact, one of the nine main principles of devotional service is *ātma-nivedanam*, offering everything to the Lord, including our mind, body, intelligence, and possessions. So let us offer our hearts to Kṛṣṇa. By His mercy, our lives will become perfect offerings to Him.

Mohinī Rādhā Devī Dāsī, a disciple of His Holiness Gopāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami, lives in India with her husband, Nārada Ṛṣi Dāsa.

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LETTERS (*continued from page 4*)

Our reply: Lord Kṛṣṇa advises in *Bhagavad-gītā* (2.14) that one must tolerate the temporary disturbances of the material nature. These disturbances come because of our senses and are a natural part of the material world. So many problems may come and go. From the material viewpoint, one day everything is favorable, and the next day everything is unfavorable. Despite such seemingly favorable and unfavorable situations brought on by our material circumstance, we must stay fixed in spiritual consciousness and continually chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

This chanting will clear our hearts of all material miseries brought on by falsely accepting the material body as the self and fix us in our true spiritual position as Lord Kṛṣṇa's eternal loving servant and associate.

Replies beginning "Our reply" were written by Krishna.com Live Help volunteers. Please write to us at: BTG, P. O. Box 430, Alachua, FL 32616, USA. Email: editors@krishna.com.

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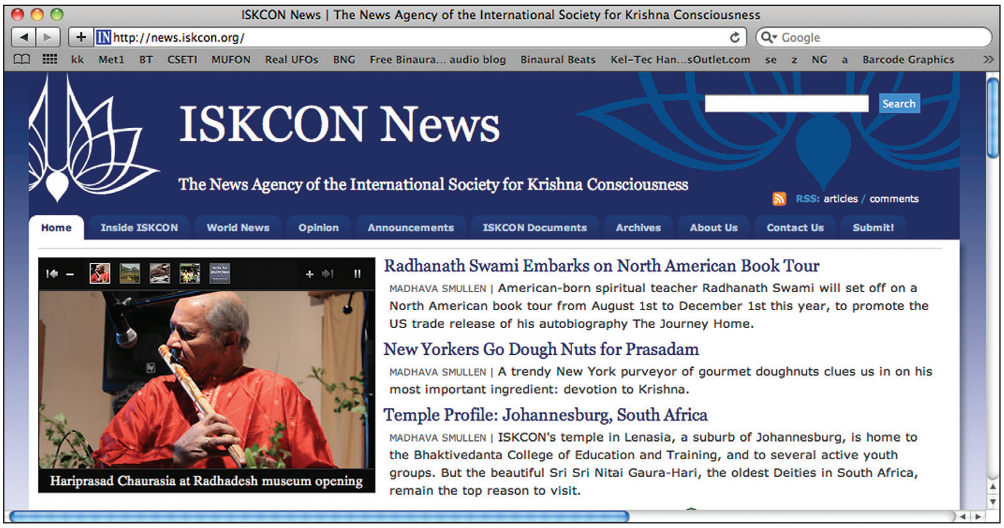
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Hariprasad Chaurasia at Radhadesh museum opening

Radhanath Swami Embarks on North American Book Tour

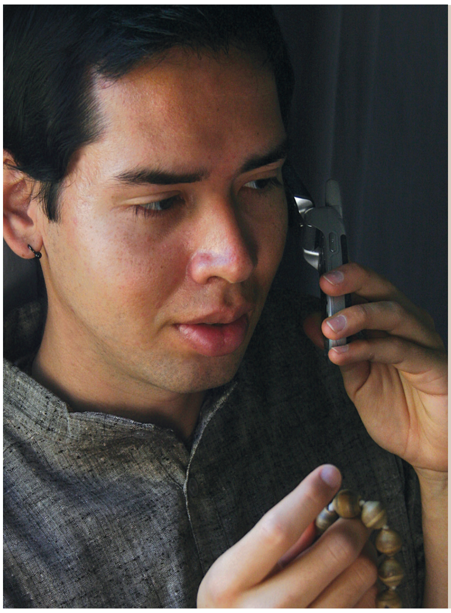
MADHAVA SMULLEN | American-born spiritual teacher Radhanath Swami will set off on a North American book tour from August 1st to December 1st this year, to promote the US trade release of his autobiography The Journey Home.

New Yorkers Go Dough Nuts for Prasadam

MADHAVA SMULLEN | A trendy New York purveyor of gourmet doughnuts clues us in on his most important ingredient: devotion to Krishna.

Temple Profile: Johannesburg, South Africa

MADHAVA SMULLEN | ISKCON's temple in Lenasia, a suburb of Johannesburg, is home to the Bhaktivedanta College of Education and Training, and to several active youth groups. But the beautiful Sri Sri Nitai Gaura-Hari, the oldest Deities in South Africa, remain the top reason to visit.



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A Leap of Understanding

THE PHILOSOPHER Søren Kierkegaard proposed that taking to spiritual life required a leap of faith. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, one of Caitanya Mahāprabhu's chief disciples, wrote that the practice of *bhakti-yoga,* which culminates in pure love of God, begins with faith. That initial faith is said to be the result of previous service to Kṛṣṇa offered unknowingly. Unknown acts of devotional service accumulate, generally over lifetimes, and influence us to accept love of God as the goal of life.

This explains why the essence of the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness—devotion to God—resonates with some people and not others. Śrīla Prabhupāda called those who've had previous contact with devotional service "pious." He said that although there are arguments for and against the existence of God, the pro-existence arguments make sense to the pious but not the impious.

Another reason people don't make the leap of faith into spiritual life is a lack of knowledge about God. Prabhupāda's mission was to teach people about God, drawing from the rich literature of the Vaiṣṇava tradition.

As an example of how Vaiṣṇava teachings can expand our understanding of God, consider that theologians often define God as existence, or being, itself. That seems to suggest that anyone who believes in an objective reality believes in God. For most people, that seems like a cop out. So, it might be fairer to say that the theologians' position is that God is being itself because He is at the root of everything that exists.

In Sanskrit, the idea of existence or being is carried by the word *sat,* which can also mean "truth," "goodness," and "eternity." Students of Kṛṣṇa consciousness are familiar with the word *sat* as part of the compound *sat-cit-ānanda,* usually translated by Śrīla Prabhupāda as "eternity, knowledge, and bliss." Prabhupāda often quoted a verse spoken by Lord Brahmā, a primary Vedic authority, that describes Lord Kṛṣṇa as possessing a form composed of eternity (*sat*), knowledge (*cit*), and bliss (*ānanda*). This confirms the idea that God is not only existence itself (*sat*), but also *cit*—knowledge or consciousness—and *ānanda,* happiness.

According to Vaiṣṇava authorities, understanding that God is existence (*sat*) is the highest realization of the *jñānīs,* who rely on philosophical speculation to understand the Absolute Truth; mature yogis can realize both the *sat* and the *cit* features of God; and *bhakti-yogis,* or devotees, can realize all three aspects, most notably *ānanda,* God's blissful nature.

Put another way, *jñānīs* realize the impersonal all-pervading *brahmajyoti,* the rays of God; yogis realize God in His form as Paramātmā, the Supersoul in the heart; and devotees realize God as the original person, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Only by contact with the highest feature of God, His personality, can we taste the full happiness every soul desires.

This discussion is just a hint of the developed theology of *bhakti-yoga.* Learning about God from realized Vaiṣṇava authorities can help people develop the faith required to embark on the path to pure love of God. Members of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement can testify to the transformative power of Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings. I for one can say that my leap of faith in taking up *bhakti-yoga* began with a leap of understanding, propelled not by my own intellect but by Prabhupāda's enlightened words.

—*Nāgarāja Dāsa*

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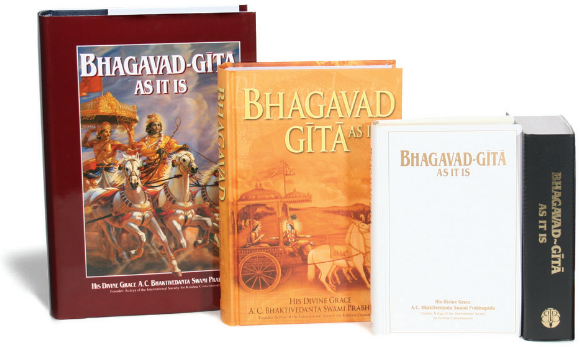
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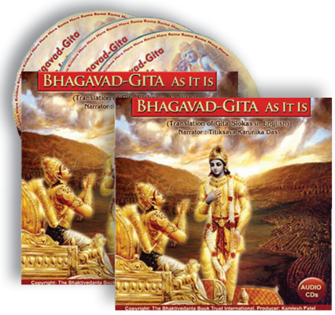
BHAGAVAD-GITA AS IT IS
BHAGAVAD-GITA AS IT IS
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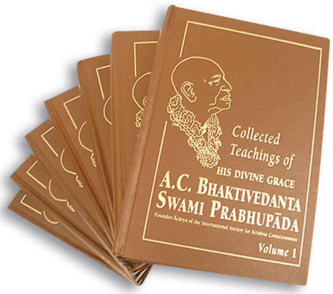
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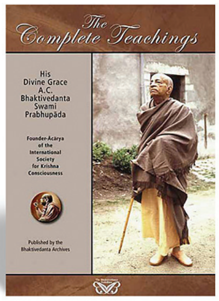
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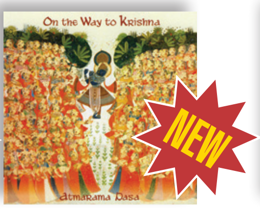
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crying of the soul
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Laksmi Nrsimha das

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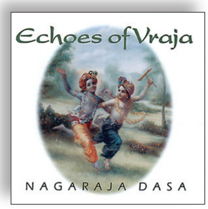
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At Sri Vrindavan Dham

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KulimeLA 2009
Bhajan Kutir
VOLUME 1

KulimeLA 2009, Bhajan Kutir, Vols. 1 & 2 (CDs)—By various artists. This selection of outstanding *kīrtanas* was recorded live at the 2009 Kuli Mela Bhajan Kutir at the ISKCON New Dwarka temple in Los Angeles. Each disc is approximately 1 hour. **$11.95** each.

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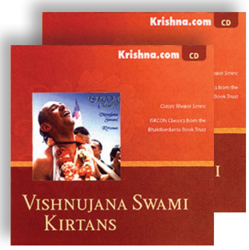
Vol. 2—KMCD210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Vishnujana Swami
Kirtans

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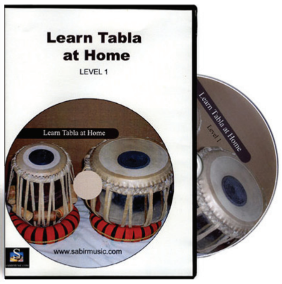
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LEVEL 1
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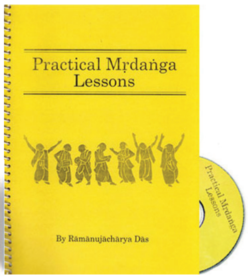
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By Rāmānujācharya Dās

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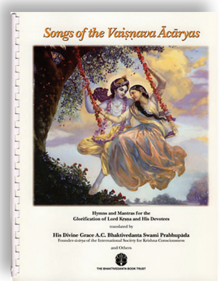
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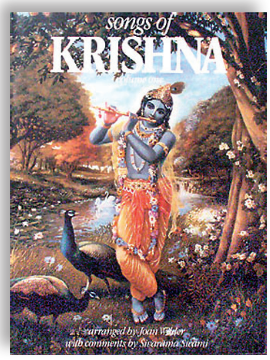
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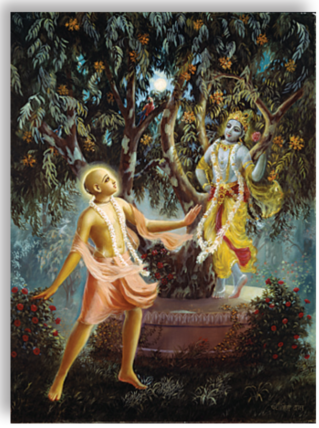

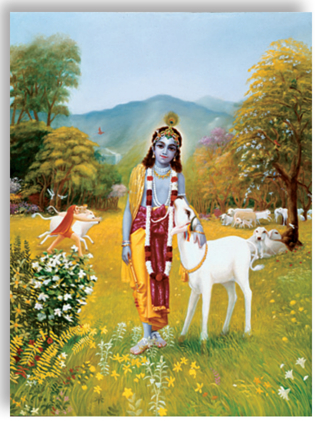

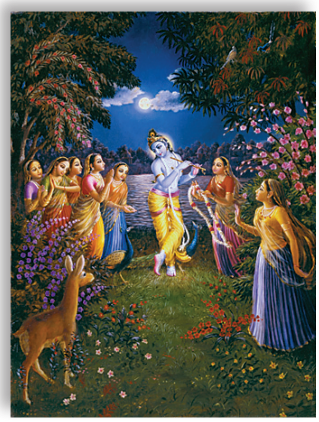

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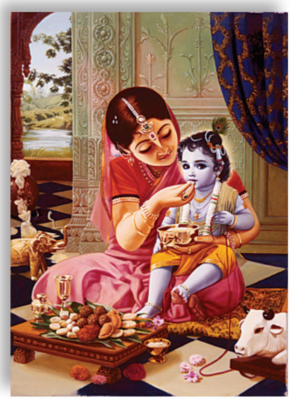

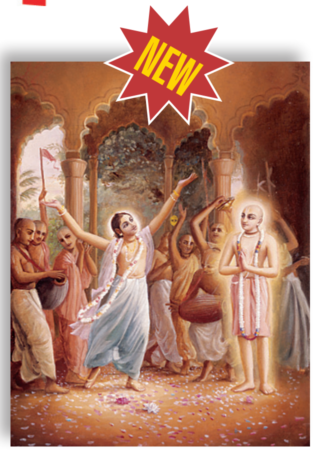

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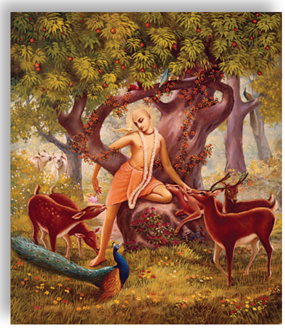

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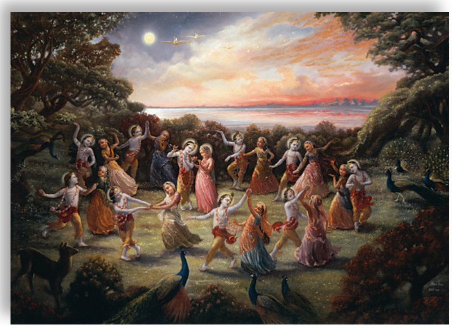

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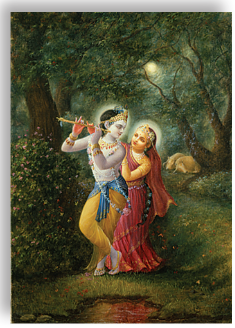

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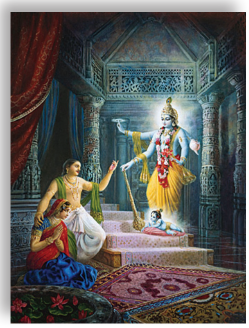

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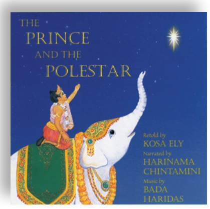
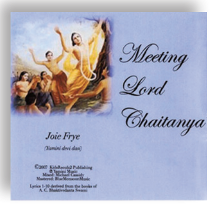
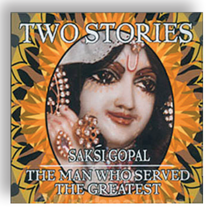
Download Tracks Online—**$0.99** each. KXDD50D



The Prince and the Polestar (CD)—By Kosarupa Ely; read by Harinama Chintamani. Prince Dhruva wishes to rule a kingdom far greater than his father's. His determination takes him to the forest in search of Lord Nārāyaṇa, who can fulfill all one's desires. Share in his exciting adventures as he meets animals and sages, performs penances, and gains a greater treasure than he ever imagined. 25 minutes. **$9.95** A5CK386



Meeting Lord Caitanya (CD)—By Yamini Devi Dasi. Sing along with these delightful songs about Lord Caitanya's childhood adventures. Take a trip back to your childhood, or share these childhood favorites with your children. Yamini's delightful voice is accompanied by piano. Approximately 27 minutes. **$15.95** M7CD405



Two Stories (CD)—Written and read by Jagattārinī Dāsī & Bhūrijana Dāsa; produced by Bhavatārinī Dāsī. *Saksi Gopal* and *The Man Who Served the Greatest* are two stories sure to catch your child's imagination and tweak his or her moral compass. They make great bedtime stories to fall asleep to, or a rainy afternoon alternative to TV. 47 minutes. **$14.95** B9CD328

VEDIC THOUGHTS

Those who understand simply that the living being is not matter but spirit soul and who desire to merge into the Supreme Spirit Soul are in the lowest transcendental position. Above them are the mystic yogis, who by meditation see within their hearts the four-handed Viṣṇu form of the Paramātmā, or Supersoul. But persons who actually associate with the Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa, are the highest among all transcendentalists.

His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta
Swami Prabhupāda
Nārada-bhakti-sūtra 2, Purport

But those who worship Me, giving up all their activities unto Me and being devoted to Me without deviation, engaged in devotional service and always meditating upon Me, having fixed their minds upon Me, O son of Pṛthā—for them I am the swift deliverer from the ocean of birth and death.

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa
Bhagavad-gītā 12.6–7

Only the purified soul can attain the perfection of associating with the Personality of Godhead in complete bliss and satisfaction in his constitutional state. Whoever is able to renovate such devotional perfection is never again attracted to this material world, and he never returns.

Śukadeva Gosvāmī
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.2.31

In this lifetime one experiences a succession of sufferings, and in the next life one is likely to experience another unbearable series of sufferings. Hearing this truth from the scriptures, an intelligent person will yearn to leave the world of birth and death.

Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī
Hari-bhakti-vilāsa 1.29

O my Lord, may I have the association of Your devotees. Association with them is a sharp sword that cuts the bonds of repeated birth and death. Association with them is the only way to attain a place at Your lotus feet. Please give me devotional service to Your lotus feet birth after birth.

Śrī Yamarāja
Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa 4.6.24

Wherever propagation of Kṛṣṇa's names and topics is lacking, there will be temple ceremonies based on solitary worship devoid of preaching, external performances of sacrifice, and the process of meditation and remembrance based on solitary worship. The Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, established the superiority of *nāma-saṅkīrtana* [chanting the holy names] over the three processes of the previous ages.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura
Caitanya-bhāgavata, Ādi-khaṇḍa 14.133,
Commentary

2010 FESTIVAL OF INDIA

Schedule for North America

September 1–2
Vancouver Śrī Kṛṣṇa Janmāṣṭamī and Vyāsa Pūjā

September 4–5
Seattle Rathayātrā

September 9–12
Joshua Tree, California, BhaktiFest

September 18–19
Boston Rathayātrā

September 25
Philadelphia Rathayātrā

October 16
Washington, D. C., Śrī Rāma Vijayotsava

IMPORTANT NOTE: Some of these dates are not yet confirmed. Before scheduling your travel, be sure to confirm the festival date with the ISKCON temple in the city where the festival is to be held. Or email Festival of India: madhuhadasa@gmail.com.